

ENHANCING THE PARTNERSHIP: ENLARGING THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE LOCAL CHURCH AND COMMUNITY THROUGH BIBLICAL
ENGAGEMENT

BY

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A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Submitted to
New York Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

New York, NY

2014

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ABSTRACT

ENHANCING THE PARTNERSHIP: ENLARGING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LOCAL CHURCH AND COMMUNITY THROUGH BIBLICAL ENGAGEMENT

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This project focuses on the significance and importance of local churches, community agencies and organizations to establish partnerships and linkages to improve the lives of residents in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York. Examining the predicament of the human condition and the biblical mandate to "love thy neighbor as thy self", the project explores the need for collaboration and reduction of barriers to build a stronger and healthier community.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother Georgia who always believed that I could become more than I ever imagined for myself.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my wife and children who supported and believed in me, my Site Team for their input and sharing my vision, and my band of brothers for encouraging and pushing me to complete the journey.

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INTRODUCTION

"But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you in exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer. 29:7, NRSV).

The text in Jeremiah 29 clearly establishes that the people of God are to be a part of their surroundings and not live in isolation; praying and becoming concerned for the community and in doing so their needs will be met. This mandate for Israel was not just for that time period, but for now as well. In the twenty-first century there are a great number of social issues in our communities, which require the attention of pastors and faith leaders in order to fulfill the Jeremiah mandate as well as the mandate of Jesus to "love thy neighbor as thy self"(Matt.22: 39).

This project began with New York Theological Seminary in conjunction with the American Bible Society (ABS) in a pilot program called *Biblical Engagement*. The ABS is an organization which began in 1816 in a mission to provide the Bible to those who did not have access to one in America and around the world. Through biblical engagement or examining Scripture to determine how the Bible makes meaning of life and issues for its readers and hearers, we take on the challenge of investigating the Bible's relevance in society today as well as the church's role and responsibility to actively participate in the growth of the community.

In my position as an Employee Assistance Program Coordinator for a New York State agency, it has been my role to assess and refer my employees to agencies, programs

and practitioners to assist them in dealing with issues of everyday life that prohibit them from performing their jobs effectively. The same can be said for my role as a pastor in trying to help congregants with issues that are out of my area of expertise and cannot be dealt with directly by me or church staff.

In reading church programs or bulletin boards, I have observed outreach initiatives such as food pantries and clothing drives that help those in need in the community; but what about issues of domestic violence and elder abuse that are the "dirty little secrets" not typically discussed in the church? If these issues can't be discussed in an open and safe space, what good is the church? My response, through this project, to dealing with the issues that the local church is not prepared for is to: open a dialogue and partner with local agencies to help those who have sensitive or more complex needs that require the expertise or resources of trained professionals; create a forum where both the church and community agencies can meet, talk, and share information; and ultimately create a listing of community agencies and the assistance they offer.

The borough of Brooklyn in New York City is home to approximately two and a half million people of all ethnic backgrounds from around the world¹. There are two hundred ninety two churches listed in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of the borough, which may not include churches which are sharing space and/or new church starts. As pastor of a new church start in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Consistent Life Ministries, as well as a member of this community for over 40 years, it is part of my mission to explore and develop a connection with local community organizations that are working to assist those in need of services.

¹ "United States Census Bureau, state and county quick facts for Kings County (Brooklyn), New York" <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36047.html> (accessed February 27, 2014)

The Bedford-Stuyvesant (Bed-Stuy) section of Brooklyn is a diverse neighborhood of largely Black and Hispanic residents and an influx of white residents since the early 2000s. Bed-Stuy is a part of Brooklyn Community Boards 3, 8, and 16, and its borders are Flushing Avenue to the North, Classon Avenue to the west; Broadway and Saratoga to the east and Atlantic Avenue to the south.² The Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation would argue that Bed-Stuy's borders are larger and include "the area from Atlantic Avenue south to Eastern Parkway, which is designated Crown Heights for the purpose of city planning."³ The 81st and 79th precincts of the NYPD patrol the area. It is served by numerous bus lines of the MTA, as well as the A, C, G and J subway lines.

Bedford-Stuyvesant was once called "the largest ghetto in the country"⁴ and then asked about in this manner, "why would anyone want to live there?"⁵ While the neighborhood no longer can be associated with the slums, abject poverty, gang violence, or drugs of the past, there are issues that still exist around economics. Almost half of the households live on less than \$25,000 a year, and 35.2% of households have an annual income of less than \$10,000.⁶ This neighborhood is a work in progress with fewer and fewer vacant lots and new construction offering opportunities to first time home buyers.

² Gerard Flynn, "Federal Cuts Hit HIV Work in Brooklyn," www.bkbureau.org.2013/02/04 federalcuts-hit-hiv-work-brooklyn (accessed Feb 9, 1014).

³ Matias Echanove, "On the Move: Demographic Trends & Economic Development in the Heart of Brooklyn" (Master's Thesis, Columbia University, 2003), 2.

⁴ Barry Stein, *Rebuilding Bedford-Stuyvesant: Community Economic Development in the Ghetto* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Center for Community Development, 1975), 18.

⁵ Mary H. Monomi, *Bedford Stuyvesant the Anatomy of a Central City Community* (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1973), 1.

⁶ Department of City Planning, City of New York, http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/neigh_info/bk03_info.shtml (accessed January 31, 2014).

The neighborhood has enjoyed resurgence in the years since 2000. The availability of brownstone homes and questionable reports of lower crime rate statistics has made Bedford-Stuyvesant more attractive along with new restaurants and other small business opportunities. The fear of displacement still looms for some homeowners and renters who could be priced out of the neighborhood. There are other notable changes as well with an increase of nearly 25% of household incomes over \$50,000 compared to one in eight households in 1990, real estate values have doubled or tripled in some cases, and the infant mortality rate decreased from 21 per thousand in 1990 to 8.7 in 2007-9.⁷ There are other social ills that need to be addressed such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has affected the borough of Brooklyn. "Central Brooklyn, specifically Bed-Stuy and Crown Heights, is considered the epicenter for HIV/AIDS epidemic in Brooklyn."⁸

A community, like a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. People who are in need and have no provisions to meet those needs create an imbalance in the community as opposed to those who have provisions and their needs met. The diverse residents in Bed-Stuy still have challenges that will not be eliminated just because more affluent residents have arrived. The recognition of these issues as well as residents becoming actively involved allows flowers to grow where weeds had taken over.

In urban areas of many cities issues exist that can compromise the quality of life for its citizens. Crime, drugs, homelessness, hunger, single-parent households, poverty and lack of healthcare are just some of the issues that individuals face on a daily basis.

⁷ Visual.ly, <http://visual.ly/brooklyn-new-york-poverty-rates-infant-mortality> (accessed February 9, 2014).

⁸ Gerard Flynn, "Federal Cuts Hit HIV Work in Brooklyn", <http://www.bkbureau.org/2013/02/04/federal-cuts-hit-hiv-work-in-brooklyn/> (accessed February 9, 2014).

The needs of senior citizens, who have given their productive years to enrich their country and communities, along with the growing population of veterans, who have risked life and limb for country, must be brought into the conversation as well.

People carry these issues of life into the church and for all the discussion of Christ and the cross; to be effective agents for change these issues must be addressed. For those who question why the church should be interested in putting time and resources into helping those in need, Jesus brought clarity to some of these issues in Matthew 25: 42-43. "For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Clearly these would be the actions of individuals insensitive to those who lived on the margins and Jesus' message was and is that if those who abide on the margin aren't being helped then ministry is not effectively being practiced.

The church and its members are a reflection of the community in most cases. The exception is the commuter church, where many of its members worship in a particular neighborhood but live elsewhere. Human beings have problems or issues regardless of their social location, so it is incumbent upon the church to have a plan to address the problems whether they can be handled in house or assistance is needed from an outside entity such as a community organization.

There was a case of rape in my former church and I was asked for advice because of my secular vocation. I learned that the victim was Hispanic, and so I advised the pastor that there were issues of diversity that he should be aware of such as the issue of shame. I also encouraged outside counseling, preferably Spanish speaking, which could go a long

way in easing the sensitivity issues surrounding the event. The church must know when it is overmatched and while belief in the power of God is important, working in tandem with trained professionals will be far more effective.

Service is what those in the body of Christ should be performing locally in our churches, in shelters, and to the world in locations where help is needed such as Haiti and Darfur. It is not just for selected Christians, but for all members of the body of Christ, regardless of the gifting, because just like the physical body it is made up of many parts working in concert to achieve maximum effort. "Every baptized Christian is called to share in the ministry of Christ, bearing witness to the gospel and showing compassion to all in need."⁹ So many church members are disengaged from the concept of ministry or have it confused with the idea that they must be in charge in order to do ministry, that the little that gets done in many churches is done by a handful of individuals.

There is so much to be done in the areas of HIV/AIDS, homelessness, hunger, mental health and crime that the churches and religious community can do to fulfill the mission of Christ and assist those in need.

There are soup kitchens and free food programs in the Bedford-Stuyvesant community along with a growing number of half-way houses for those newly released from prison and those who are mentally challenged. Noting that there are programs in existence, the economic crisis that affects America affects the bottom line greater in the inner city where median incomes are less. "Although the context has changed the need for a wide variety of community ministries has increased; at the same time our national

⁹ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 417.

resources for responding to crises have diminished."¹⁰ Local churches have to be community responsive to help where the government can no longer help, and recognize the unrecognizable outside the church doors. "To be in mission is to be sent out. To carry out God's mission one must move beyond one's own self, one's own world, to enter into participatory relationships with others and with God."¹¹

Several issues remain challenges not only for residents in the Bed-Stuy community, but in many communities in many cities in the U.S. How the church can fulfill the mandate of Jeremiah 29 and become a partner or strengthen partnerships with local organizations helping those in need find resources? These issues transcend religious affiliation, denomination, ethnicity or gender in trying to insure that "the needs of the people are treated as holy."¹² Church, state and private industry should all have a part in helping those in need and it should be done by respecting everyone as human beings.

¹⁰ Carl S. Dudley, "Faith-Based Community Ministries in a 9/11 World," <http://www.pbs.org/thecongregation/indepth/communityministries.html> (accessed March 28, 2012).

¹¹ Dale T. Irvin and Akintunde E. Akinade, *The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 174.

¹² Obery Hendricks Jr. *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Three Leaves Publishing 2006), 103.

CHAPTER 1

I HAVE TO LOVE MY NEIGHBOR?

Love, compassion and empathy are integral when working with social issues and those in need of assistance. I am not naive in thinking that all who work with those in need to provide services are altruistic. I acknowledge that there are plenty who just want and need to get paid, however, my work in the human service field has shown me that those who will generally go the extra mile possess characteristics that can't be purchased. Within every community there are individuals who need care and support in order for the community to operate at its best, and for their issues to not stifle growth within that population. While most would like to stay to themselves and not get involved with those who do not appear to be striving, if we are not our brothers and sisters keepers, at some point we may become impacted by the weight of our neglect.

"Every man is potentially every other man's neighbor. Neighborliness is nonspatial; it is qualitative. A man must love his neighbor directly, clearly, permitting no barriers between."¹³ Dr. Howard Thurman wrote these words in 1949 in *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Dr. Thurman was dealing with the issues of racism and the disparity that it created in society. He was qualified to speak on such issues having been the co-pastor of the San Francisco Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, described by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as "one of the first churches composed of African-American, Asian

¹³ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976), 89.

Americans, and Euro-Americans in 1943."¹⁴ Dr. Thurman was a mentor to Dr. King, and certainly had an impact on Dr. King's philosophy in trying to develop his idea of the "beloved community."

On my block there is a halfway house whose residents are recovering drug addicts. Although there were some initial concerns when the home was opened, many of the men who have lived at the home were comfortable when engaging in conversation, keeping the block clean, and putting longtime residents at ease. Recently one of the residents died, and the pastor of one of the churches in the block allowed the church to be used for a memorial service. The gentleman was not a member of the church, but was always cordial, smiling and sharing a good word with the neighbors. That act of kindness allowed the love from the community to be represented as several neighbors from the block attended the service.

Who is my neighbor, what does love have to do with my neighbor, and why should I love my neighbor as myself? Jesus raised these issues in his ministry not to be profound or deep but to tear down the walls of hate and class of his day. Love seems simple to those in similar locations. You look like me so I should love you, or you have similar ideas as mine so I can love you, but the problems begin when there are little or no commonalities, or I fear your ideas will cost me those things that I have obtained. To the rich young ruler, the conversation with Jesus in Matthew 19 became difficult when Jesus gave him the directive to sell his earthly possessions and give them to the poor. To the young man, keeping the commandments and honoring his mother and father were no

¹⁴ The Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project. 583, <http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Vol2/551031ToThurman.pdf> (accessed December 31, 2013).

problem because, as he said, he had been doing those things early in life, but when it came to his possessions his love for them outweighed his love for humanity.

One of my goals for this project was to conduct a Bible study with a group consisting of individuals who were a part of regular worship (churched) and individuals who may not have been of a regular worship service (un-churched). The difference in the two groups is that the "churched", being regular worshippers, can develop filters based on the shared attitudes of a larger group; while the "un-churched" tend to be more open with questions and answers that come from different life lessons.

I had the opportunity to conduct a Bible study at the All Angels' Church on West 80th street in Manhattan, which has a comprehensive and highly effective ministry to the homeless. All Angels' Church has been in existence since 1846 when it was established by St. Michael's Episcopal Church. The church developed an identity of mission focused on assisting the residents in the Seneca Village community. Seneca Village was an area established by free blacks that existed from 1825 through 1855 when it was torn down to make way for Central Park.¹⁵ The church relocated to a location on West End Avenue and 80th street, and presently worships in the building that was the parish house. All Angels' is a model for effective ministry, especially to underserved populations such as the homeless.

Not only is there a worship service that welcomes homeless persons on Sunday evenings, but they also provide a meal and shelter services on Sunday as well. During the week services such as showers, clothing, medical and psychological services are provided to those individuals in need. I had the opportunity to talk to the rector of the church, Rev.

¹⁵ Douglas Martin, "A Village Dies, A Park Is Born," *nytimes.com*, 31 January, 1997, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/01/31/arts/a-village-dies-a-park-is-born.html> (accessed December 12, 2013).

Milind Sojwal, concerning the homeless ministry and how it thrives in such an affluent community as the Upper West Side where the median income is \$95,928 compared to New York City and Bedford-Stuyvesant which are \$49,461 and \$37,518 respectively.¹⁶ Rev. Sojwal said that All Angels' second rector began working with underserved populations many years ago by opening a soup kitchen which created an alternative service for that population, and although the church does have affluent members it discovered its identity for ministry through caring for those who are less fortunate. Rev. Sojwal continues to support the efforts to offer the homeless population a safe space that has clearly changed lives. Rev. Iana Ryan, Director of Community Ministries at All Angels', explained that homelessness is not just a matter of needing shelter, but individuals who at one time may have been considered successful citizens with jobs, responsibilities and families became unable to handle the pressures of life.

Some of the homeless have issues of drug abuse, mental illness, legal problems and others which are not seen on the surface, but are revealed when the guard is down and trust can be established. It is through programs like All Angels' which go the extra mile to establish linkages with mental health clinics, legal programs that do pro bono work, and medical programs, that the mission of Christ is acted out. "If it is Christ-centered, the missionary activity of the church will follow the way of the cross and will show a partiality to outsiders, strangers, and all those considered alien, unworthy, or disturbingly different."¹⁷

¹⁶ City-Data.com, www.City-Data.com (accessed December 16, 2013).

¹⁷ Patrick R. Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger: a Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1992), 8.

The church's ability to provide so many services to this population has allowed many of the individuals I met to find supportive housing, jobs and a sense of community within the church. I heard testimony after testimony of the participants of how someone from All Angels' took an interest in them, invited them to the church and now they are actively involved in the ministry themselves whether it's singing in the choir or taking a lead role as a Wellness Leader in groups that foster growth and independence. At the Tuesday night "Recovery Cafe", which has become a ministry geared towards individuals who may not want to be a part of a traditional worship service, there is food, a worship service followed by an informational session that covers relevant topics, and then smaller groups break out for short classes in various areas including Bible study.

I entitled the Bible study *Love Thy Neighbor* with the mindset that I would be less of a teacher and more of a facilitator. I would facilitate or lead the group discussion and hear and learn from the participants what loving one's neighbor meant to a group that had lived and still live on the margins. I began with a reading from the text in Matthew 19: 16-26. Here Jesus begins speaking to the rich young ruler who we spoke of earlier with less than positive results. The young man seemed to be on the right track with a question concerning eternal life, but like so many people then and now he was only willing to gain it on his terms.

We then began to talk about good deeds and whether good deeds are enough to get to heaven and could one buy their way in. All around the room there was acknowledgment that relationship with God was important and that no amount of good deeds alone could get one into heaven. After a brief overview of the socio-economic and historical context of the time of Jesus, I began to focus on the questions, who is my

neighbor, and how loving your neighbor impacts one's life. We came to the understanding that a neighbor was someone who you didn't have to know personally, but was a part of your community. For some it was the person who they would see and interact with periodically, while others it was occasional with a wave and a smile.

I then asked the question, who had experienced a loving act from a stranger? Everyone in attendance began telling a story about their homeless situation and someone from All Angels' reaching out to them with a kind word, and an invitation to participate in one of the programs. There were about fifteen to twenty people in the group that evening and everyone, even those who were limited in their proficiency of English, shared regarding the love they had received. They said that love through another human being had brought them to a place that gave them a sense of *koinoina* or community. This was a powerful experience for me, one that gave me renewed hope that love is still working, as well as, the words of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 13 which explain that no matter what works we do, if we do them without love, they are of no effect.

Sitting at a table with several individuals during a Tuesday "Recovery Café" session, before the Bible study, there was a round table discussion on who we confide in. Each person was asked to share the individual they felt most comfortable with and could count on. One of the gentlemen told his story about his brother, who he could rely on for assistance. His story took the long way around by way of Bedford -Stuyvesant in Brooklyn to Europe and the life that he had as an international fencer then back to his brother. Being a former fencer myself, I engaged him in conversation and discovered that we had gone to the same junior high school. My new acquaintance had fallen on hard times but was working his way back to feeling better about himself.

Each of the four weeks of the study I would read a different version of the Bible to examine if one reading had more significance over the other, or if the different reading added clarity to the text. I found that all the readings were accepted without question. The third week after I had read the text, one of the first time visitors, a gentleman with a big booming voice, asked me if he had to honor his mother as Jesus had suggested to the rich young ruler. I asked him was there a reason why he shouldn't and he began to tell the story of how his mother had given birth to him at the age of fourteen (he was now 61 years old) and that she had to give him up to live in foster homes most of his life. He also said that he met his mother when he was an adult and she told him that she was not interested in having a relationship with him.

I asked the gentleman to consider a few things concerning his mother and how things worked out. The first was that his mother was a teen and should have been concentrating on anything else but having sex or having a child. Secondly, his mother was faced with a great deal of adult decisions with an immature mind and, as he had stated, she was forced to give him up. The last thing I asked him to consider was that she could have tried and been successful in aborting him which would have made the conversation we were having impossible, so while the rejection that he felt could be understood, what was the benefit? He responded, "I guess I should honor my mother". One of the women in the group then shared her story as a pregnant teen and the difficulties that she had in raising her daughter, and the resentment her daughter had for her because of the struggle they had in life.

From the Bible study with this group I was able to see differences of how these individuals with such diverse backgrounds and situations that made them homeless sat,

listened and shared the text from unique perspectives. Love of one's neighbor had a profound meaning for them. One gentleman told of having a roommate who would become verbally abusive and once physically to him, and while many if not all would have considered moving, this man decided that he liked his location too well and worked out a peaceful settlement with his roommate and even got him to come to the church!

The Greek language comes out with another word which is called the *agape*. *Agape* is more than romantic love, *agape* is more than friendship. *Agape* is *understanding*, creative, redemptive, good will to all men. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. Theologians would say it is the love of God operating in the human heart. So when one rises to love on this level, he loves men not because he likes them, not because his ways appeal to him, but he loves every man because God loves him.¹⁸

The words of Dr. King reflect the understanding of the words brotherhood, community neighbor and selflessness. It was through the Civil Rights movement that blacks, whites, rich and poor marched together, cried together, were arrested together and began to look at each other without the hate and contempt that slavery had created in this country, because they finally saw each other as neighbors. It is important for the church to continue to be in conversation and partnership with those who work to assist individuals who are not wealthy, able bodied, mentally stable or whose needs are fully met, in order to sustain a thriving community.

I approached some of my co-laborers in the gospel to share their views on what love thy neighbor means to them.

Rev. Daryl G. Bloodsaw, Assistant Pastor, First Baptist Church, Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

I subscribe to the notion of Matthew 22:39 as offered by St.

Augustine who asks the question "who is my neighbor?" The importance

¹⁸ James Melvin Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

of this speaks volumes when looking at our understanding of essence of love and loving our neighbor as ourselves. It is only in the answer to this question where we can begin to see its prominence - second only to the loving God - in Jesus' conflation of the full Ten Commandments. Once we have a firm grasp of what it means to "love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our minds" it is of paramount importance to fully comprehend what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves. Defining who our neighbor is of great consequence because it has the power to push and press us beyond the confines of our comfort zones. Recognizing that our neighbor is not just whom we may live with, or simply those with whom we share ideals and physical territory, but instead it is inclusive of even those with whom we may not agree and is critical to our compliance to the imperative from Jesus to care for, to consider, to love others as we love ourselves.

St. Augustine answers the question of "who is my neighbor" with a resolute "he who has a need." According to St. Augustine (with whom I agree wholeheartedly) our neighbor is anyone who has a need and if we are to look at Jesus' command through this lens then an economic system predicated on a certain percentage of people remaining unemployed and thereby subjected to the whims of those of power must be modified or labeled as evil. It negates the fact that if we are to live out the creed of our Jesus and love others as ourselves then we must work towards an end to poverty and oppression. This does not in any way, shape, or form stipulate

that everyone has to have the same thing; if God had intended all people to have the same or to be the same God would have simply created everyone the same. To this end, it is the responsibility ("radah" in Hebrew is typically translated as "dominion over" but against the backdrop of love where God intended none to be subjected to any other except Himself it is more aptly and appropriately translated as "responsibility for") of those who have to make provisions for those who do not; particularly when in this country many of the conditions of those who have needs were created by and are continually sustained by those who have power. God is simply calling on us to "mind our business" where "our business" is each other.

While there are times when I am at issue with St. Augustine's interpretation of scripture - particularly where he ascribes to a "top-down" interpretation rather than a "bottom-up" interpretation, on this question of "loving our neighbor as ourselves" I stand by his side.¹⁹

Evangelist Shirleen Brown, Associate Minister, Consistent Life Ministries, Brooklyn, NY

Jesus commanded Israel, and then to those who would be called Christians, that we are to "Love thy neighbor as thyself." For centuries man has tried to sidestep this command; whereas, the sinner man may not be held to this command, truly the believer is. The believer has tried everything to limit how much love must be dispersed and under which circumstances and situations that it must be given to the point that this requirement of absolute love has been placed under the heading of

¹⁹ Daryl Bloodsaw, emailed to Donald Odom, New York, NY, February 1, 2014.

"watered down Christianity." If we narrow the definition of neighbor down to our next door neighbor then we do well because that excludes everyone else. If we narrow the definition of neighbor down to those who live on our block or in our community, then we still fair well because the demographics are not too far reaching. But when we are asked to consider a group of people, i.e. the poor, the orphaned, the abused, the misused, the elderly, the disabled and so on, as our neighbor, we become melancholy because, "as much is given, much is required" and the numbers and magnitudes of those groups "given to us" mean that we must always have our Christian banner of love on display and we must remain ready for duty.

Who am I to love? I am to love my neighbor. The word neighbor is defined as any person who is near us. It comes from two old words, nae (near) and buer (to dwell); therefore, persons residing, or being near us, are our neighbors. When the Samaritan, given the title of "Good", came upon the wounded man on the road to Jericho, he saw a man in need in his neighborhood. He knew he had to help him because no matter where the man in need originated from, just the fact that the wounded man was in his neighborhood made him his neighbor and the Samaritan was compelled to help him.²⁰

Elder James Baker, Pastor, Grace and Truth Ministries, Teaneck, New Jersey.

The theme of the Old Testament as emphasized by our Lord Jesus:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all

²⁰ Shirleen Brown, emailed to Donald Odom, New York, NY, February 1, 2014.

your soul, and with all your mind" (Deut 6:5; Matthew 22:37, etc.). It is not new, but it is easily forgotten, and so the need for another reminder.

It is my belief and view that these life changing verses which follow Matthew 22:37-39 articulate and apply the second great theme of the Bible—our obligation to love God by loving others. In Old Testament terms, once again reiterated and confirmed in the New Testament, this obligation is: "**You shall love your neighbor as yourself**" (Lev 19:18; Matthew 22:39; Romans 13:9, etc.). Love for our neighbor is a dominant and cohesive theme in various significant places in the NT (Romans 12:3, 15:3). Love must inspire and govern our ministry to one another within the body of Christ as we exercise our spiritual gifts in authentic Kingdom service.

In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus shares and shows how love is to govern our relationships, not only with our fellow-believers, but also with our neighbors and even our enemies (Matthew 5:48). In these verses, Jesus teaches and speaks of the good which love inspires—even if the recipients persecute the Christians who practice such love.

Beginning in Matthew 22:37, Jesus shares the commitment of love that we need to build authentic relationships. Jesus directs our attention to what love will do, and not only love God who we have not seen but, love our neighbor who see readily and daily. Specifically, love does no wrong to our neighbor (noted in Romans 13:10). Matthew 22:37-39 engages and redirects our attention God-ward, providing both the motivation and the

means for living in love. Jesus directs us to think both of our initial salvation and of our final salvation, and of the limited time which we have to offer to Him our service of worship in this life.

Love is not only the motivation which inspires our actions; it is the principle by which our actions are governed. Please see the Heart of our Lord in the text Matthew 22:37-39. Loving God and loving men is therefore to be the outgrowth of salvation and of sound doctrine. These themes give unity to the entire Kingdom of God.

Even more, the Kingdom minded heart should look beyond him/herself to others with a spirit of obligation, an obligation rooted in gratitude toward God and in love toward others. Unfortunately in our culture, we look to others with a very different attitude. We might be able to capture the essence of this attitude with the term "expectation." In our sinful, self-seeking flesh, we do not look upon others with an obligation to serve them at our expense, but to be served by them at their expense. We live in a day of expectation, not obligation.

These responses from the members of clergy demonstrate the impact of Jesus' statement to those who are able to look beyond themselves in order to serve others. Rev. Bloodsaw pointed out that love is inclusive and transcends the need to have common interests or familial ties in order to be exercised. Evangelist Brown challenges any follower of Christ to also expand the boundaries of whom we say we love to include the disabled, elderly and marginalized groups so that love becomes more than just a word that is over used and lacks sentiment. Elder Baker implores us to allow love to motivate

our actions towards others in order to grasp the concept of the Kingdom of God. The responses are at the heart of this project to unite church and community together to impact neighbors in need in a greater way than ever before. I believe they reflect the hearts of servants who understand their purpose

Love in demonstration is at the heart of the crucifixion. Sacrifice for strangers and meeting the needs of those who may not have known they were in need of is what Jesus did. In Luke 10:25-37 Jesus encounters a lawyer who asks what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answers the question with a question as he queries the learned man, what is written in the law? What have you read? The lawyer replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself". Jesus told him do that he answered correctly and if he did that he would live eternally.

The lawyer who wanted to justify himself then asked who is my neighbor? He had an idea of who his neighbor should be and was looking to limit his obligation. Jesus then told him the parable of the Samaritan who had rescued the wounded man that the priest and the Levite had passed on the road. In his last question to the lawyer Jesus asked who the neighbor to the wounded man was and, the lawyer replied the Samaritan who showed mercy. Dr. King summed up the matter this way. "A spiritual myopia limits our vision to external accidents. We see men as Jews or Gentiles, Catholics or Protestants, Chinese or American, Negroes or whites. We fail to think of them as fellow human beings made from the same basic stuff as we, molded in the same divine image. The priest and the Levite saw only a bleeding body, not a human being like themselves. But the Good

Samaritan will always remind us to remove the cataracts of provincialism from our spiritual eyes and see men as men."²¹

There will always be those individuals who believe that we are in this world but not of it, implying that that as citizens of the kingdom of heaven we have no responsibility to serve as jurors because we should not judge or become involved in politics as these are earthly matters. When that is the case so many more suffer because of the need for numbers of people needed to fight for a cause, sending a message to the powers that be that as a group we're not going to take it anymore. The Civil Rights movement gained momentum because so many blacks and whites joined the cause to end the discrimination that kept the nation segregated. The crucifixion of Christ was a political measure used to kill the voice that was causing political upheaval for the Roman government, Herodians and the Pharisees. For those who say they are followers of Christ and don't want to be involved in politics are missing the goal of his earthly ministry that run on a platform of love.²²

²¹ Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 24.

²² James Baker, emailed to Donald Odom, New York, NY, February 1, 2014.

CHAPTER 2

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

In looking at the demographics of Bed-Stuy there are people from all walks of society. Black, White, Hispanic, rich, poor, young, old, educated, and others who fit a category as well as those who are happy outside the box. The one thing they share is community. Not everyone cares from the standpoint that they are willing to become involved, but can ultimately be impacted by the actions of an individual who lives next door or across the street. The noisy neighbor, the drug dealer, the insensitive dog walker who doesn't clean up after his/her dog can impact another person's quality of life. There is a song that asks who knows what goes on behind closed doors? A television show called *Naked City* told viewers that there were eight million stories in the naked city, and they were viewing one of them. That is still true today as we live side by side with people who we have no idea who they are or what they deal with on a daily basis.

The first recorded crime in the Bible is the killing of Abel by his brother Cain. From suburban areas where residents always express shock at crimes in their neighborhood to urban enclaves such as Newark, New Jersey, where crime rarely takes a vacation, we are forced to deal with man's inhumanity to man.

Crime impacts the quality of life of citizens in all communities. How often do we think about what happens to a person who is incarcerated? Does correction as in correctional facility really mean that there is transformation occurring, and the inmate will be a better person? Where does that individual go when he/she has finished his/her

sentence? Very often that individual goes back to the neighborhood where he/she comes from, and many times where the crime was committed. The victim of the crime can still suffer as those individuals may still live in the community as well. Henry G. Covert in his book *Ministry to the Incarcerated* discusses the difficulties that former inmates face dealing with returning home.

Most released offenders return to the same environment that contributed to their crimes, and the negative influences of these surroundings are normally still present. Some of their previous friends may even welcome them back into the fold. Individuals with drug and alcohol problems find these influences overpowering, especially when things are not going well with their transition to society.

Recidivism, the action of the formerly incarcerated returning to prison, has not decreased notably although spending on prisons continues to rise. "States today spend more than 50 billion a year on corrections, yet recidivism rates remain stubbornly high."²⁴

New York spends an average of \$60, 000 dollars per inmate who is incarcerated. It is felt that the high-risk communities where the highest numbers of inmates come from lack dollars being spent in areas of need such as education, health and housing.²⁵ It would be money better spent that helps to eliminate the disparity between those who have the opportunity to access a well performing educational system, live in decent housing free from the stigma of "the ghetto" and poverty. When hope of the "good life" is taken away, despair and desperation are not far behind, and unfortunately in the black

²³ Henry G. Covert, *Ministry to the Incarcerated* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1995). 62.

²⁴ "State of Recidivism: the Revolving Door of America's Prisons," The Pew Charitable Trust. April 12, 2011, http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/sentencing_and_corrections/State_Recidivism_Revolving_Door_America_Prisons%20.pdf (accessed January 3, 2014).

²⁵ Trymaine Lee, "Recidivism Hard to Shake for Ex-Offenders Returning Home to Dim Prospects," *TheHuffingtonPost.com*, 9, June 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/09/recidivism-harlem-convicts_n_1578935.html (accessed January 3, 2013).

community turning to drugs and crime are within reach. "According to the Bureau of Labor, the unemployment rate for African-Americans is doubled that of whites and African-American males continue to account for 50% of the prison population."²⁶

Profiting due to incarceration for crimes whether gross or petty continues to be motivation for some who consider some human life no more than a means to an end. If we consider convict leasing during the Reconstruction era, a practice where those who were arrested for primarily petty crimes such as vagrancy and had no means to hire an attorney or pay the fines they were assessed were "leased" as laborers to private bidders to work off their fines and gain their release.²⁷ This practice which happened primarily to black males became a new form of slavery.

Trials were discouraged; lawyers for black misdemeanor defendants were scant. Indeed, the fee system-with its additional charge for each act in the judicial process or appearance of another witness or official-was a built-in disincentive to prisoners who knew each added dollar of their final fine and costs would ultimately equate to additional days held in forced labor.²⁸

Many of the men were treated harshly, doing hard labor with poor medical care, and unfortunately many died without their freedom paying off their debt.

An article written by Barbara Harris of the *New York Daily News* on January 9, 2012 charged the 81st Precinct in Bed-Stuy with withholding crime statistics for the past eleven years according to the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU). High ranking officials within the precinct were allegedly caught on tape instructing officers to keep up quotas on stop-and-frisk arrests and keep down the number of certain types of robbery

²⁶ Bureau of Labor, "Unemployed Persons by Marital Status, Race, Age, and Sex," (22 Mar 2005). <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaa24.pdf> (accessed December 12, 2013).

²⁷ Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 67.

²⁸ Ibid., 66.

complaints. This was allegedly done to manipulate crime statistics. The article goes on to say that all other precincts in the city had complied but the 81st, and representatives of the New York City Police Department claimed that releasing the reports would hamper ongoing investigations without explaining how the release of the information would cause interference.²⁹ I am not sure what the underlying cause for holding back this information does. Does it make the community appear safer so that the individuals looking to buy into the neighborhood come in?

Communities such as Bed-Stuy are lifted when those on the least effective end of the social structure are helped to leave behind the stigma of poverty and despair and have hope materialized by way of services and equality. Giving out more tools for advancement will create more options for those who might see their only way out as taking from someone who seemingly has more. There are those who see crime as the actions of depraved individuals who are not human, but for every murderer or perpetrator of an assault or violent crime there are those who have not had the benefit of a loving home, an education, or hope of a bright future.

The idea that we have a penal system in place that sends convicted criminals to correctional facilities to rehabilitate their lives, but in many cases no longer offer inmates educational opportunities beyond the eighth grade, nor a trade that will give them the opportunity to return to society and our neighborhoods to earn a living wage, or allow a convicted felon a chance to hold a trade license, or maintain the right to vote, can be viewed as criminal in itself.

²⁹ Barbara Ross, "NYPD Won't Divulge Key Crime Stats for Bed-Stuy Precinct," *nydailynews.com*, 9 January 2012, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/nypd-won-divulge-key-crime-stats-quota-controversy-article-1.1003638>. (accessed January 3, 2013).

"A large percentage of criminals do not have a high school education, and very few have been exposed to cultural and religious diversity. This affects inmate relationships and personal growth."³⁰ Too often society takes a finite view of issues that they deem unworthy of their attention or compassion. I have begun to look at the back story of people's lives and circumstances of their beginnings in the hope of understanding why people do what they do. Covert, who was a police officer and now serves as a chaplain, believes that inmate education will open new doors for the inmate, assisting inmates to gain hope that their lives on the outside can be positive.

In May of 2013, Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes launched a program called JusticeHome which allows women with children an opportunity to finish their sentences at home to take care of their children. This program looks to build on the success of the D.A.s Drew House, a group home which opened in 2008 and allows convicted mothers to be in residence with their children while receiving social service assistance in lieu of jail time. "Some children are taken in by relatives where they may become a financial burden. Other kids wind up in foster care. Prior to 2007, convicted women with children in foster care for more than fifteen months lost their parental rights and the children were put up for adoption."³¹ A Columbia University study done in 2011, found that none of the graduates of the Drew House program had not committed another crime.

Because their threat to the community is considered low, the women in the JusticeHome Program are not required to wear ankle monitoring devices and have

³⁰ Henry G. Covert, *Ministry to the Incarcerated*, 36.

³¹ Joanna Molloy, "Brooklyn D.A. to Launch Program Allowing Female Felons to Serve Sentences at Home," *www.nydaily news*, 7 May 2013, <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/molloy-program-moms-serve-sentences-home-article-1.1337817> (accessed January 20, 2014).

freedom of movement. The DA's office has other programs that are in place to try to keep everyone who commits low level crimes out of jail. The Drug Treatment Alternative-to-Prison Program (DTAP) was initiated in 1990 to non-violent felons with a history of substance abuse issues offering treatment instead of jail. The treatment program is half the cost of jail and gives the offender a chance to return home clean.

Operation Safe Surrender is another program designed to assist those with outstanding warrants generally for issues such as turnstile hopping, unpaid tickets, marijuana offences, or low-level c summonses. The offenders come in voluntarily have their warrant reviewed and adjudicated and are given a disposition on the spot. This program is done in conjunction with the Kings County District Attorney's office, the Legal Aid Society, New York State Court Administration and Brooklyn churches. I recently volunteered at one of these events and was glad to see mostly black males handling their business and not ending up in jail for a correctable situation.

The issue of HIV/AIDS continues to be of concern for individuals living in Bed-Stuy. According to Dr. Marilyn Martin-Naar, Director of the AIDS Center at Interfaith Medical Center in Brooklyn, the Bed-Stuy and Crown Heights, areas of Central Brooklyn, are the epicenter for the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Brooklyn.³² The issues of poverty, stigma, lack of information and high number of incarceration have greatly affected the lack of treatment and ability of health care professionals to curtail the epidemic.

It is because this plague first affected gay men (and continues to bombard us) that Ronald Reagan ignored it. It is one of the reasons George W. Bush instead turned his attention to the African AIDS epidemic. It is also likely the reason that for the first 30 years of the epidemic our country did not have a national AIDS policy (White House Office of National AIDS Policy 2010). The Obama administration finally acknowledged the havoc

³² Danielle Douglass, "Targeting AIDS in Central Brooklyn" *ourtimepress.com*, 1 April 2005. https://nycma.fcny.org/nycma/voices/165/news/news_3/ (accessed January 5, 2014).

AIDS created in the United States and for gay men-for my generation, the Stonewall generation that preceded us, and a generation of millennials, who were born into a world where AIDS is a global pandemic and a reality of their lives.³³

The church addresses its own issues of how to deal with HIV/AIDS individuals, and not always well. The continued association of the disease with homosexuality and then viewing homosexuality as sin and shunning homosexuals from the church is not the full story and has to be understood from everywhere it enters our society. The stigma that is attached to beliefs of those who have contracted the disease deters an individual from wanting to be a part of the church community and sometimes drives them into another community that appears far less hopeful.

Stigma is a powerful phenomenon, inextricably linked to the value placed on varying social identities. It is a social construction that involves at least two fundamental components: (1) the recognition of difference based on some distinguishing characteristic, or "mark"; and (2) a consequent devaluation of the person.³⁴

People may not have to wear the scarlet letter to identify them as on the margins, or live in leper colonies as we have read in the Bible, but society has found a way to inflict the same kind of pain on those issues they find distasteful. Once the church returns to the focus of *agape* love and asks how it can help instead of rejecting the package in which it came, then the community can be strengthened.

Domestic violence is an ethical and moral problem in the world but especially in the United States, the "land of the free", where some two thousand to four thousand women are beaten to death every year.³⁵ Those freedoms involve the right for a woman to say no to a man and not be beaten or abused for it; for women to not be victimized as in

³³ Perry N. Halkitis, *The AIDS Generation: Stories of Survival and Resilience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.

³⁴ Todd Heatherton, Robert E. Kleck, Michelle R. Hebl, and Jay G. Hull, eds., *The Social Psychology of Stigma* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2000), 3.

³⁵ Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church's Response* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 102.

the case of the multi-billion industry of pornography; for our young women to not have to grow up in a society that would allow for a woman to be a Supreme Court Justice or Secretary of State, but then allow women to be called 'b-tches and hoes' in songs and be degraded in video portrayals. As a father of both sons and daughters, how could I tell my sons it is acceptable to slap a woman around to make her 'behave' and yet be outraged if a man put his hands on my daughters? How can a cultural icon to some like Snoop Dog/Lion make the degrading videos of scantily clad women or rap songs with lyrics that downgrade women and yet do a reality show about fatherhood?

Issues of homelessness and hunger are tied into poverty and are issues of the community that cannot be ignored. At one time, we, as individuals, might not have known a homeless person or family first hand, but that has changed. We are constantly reminded that many households are two paychecks away from homelessness. That would also indicate that money, and the lack of it threatens many not only in this community but society. We have such terms as the "shrinking middle class" and the "working poor", and I recently heard the term "working homeless", which refers to those individuals who while still managing to hold on to their jobs, have lost their apartments and homes resorting to living with relatives or having to go to shelters.

The living wage debate is one that cannot be ignored. Many individuals are not skilled laborers and must work in the retail and the fast food industries where minimum wage is the prevailing norm and not sufficient for them to sustain an apartment, food, clothing, transportation, or a family. Many work two jobs to make ends meet. Everyone does not mishandle money or spend frivolously. As I passed by real estate offices in Bed-Stuy, I noticed rooms now renting for six hundred dollars a month, when they used to go

for seventy five dollars a week. That is how one can become one of the "working poor."

Does race or ethnicity dictate who is poor? Is poverty a mindset?

According to information provided by the U.S. Census bureau in 2007, the poverty rate for all individuals was 12.3% in 2006. Children who are at the poverty level are more likely to be products of single parent households run by women, and inner-city youth are seven times more likely at risk of becoming neglected or abused children.³⁶

One of the issues that Dr. Ruby K. Payne points out in *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* is that there are a few ways of looking at poverty. "Typically, poverty is thought of in terms of financial resources only. However, the reality is that *financial resources*, while extremely important, do not explain the differences in the success with which individuals leave poverty nor the reasons that many stay in poverty."³⁷

This view is similar to Jesus' sermon on the mountain when he said blessed are the poor in spirit. When Jesus spoke to the masses, there were those who were not only poor financially, but broken by the oppressive Roman government living on the margins, forgotten and disrespected. His words provided hope that even if financially they never were able to possess tangible wealth, they still had worth. Worth and dignity are still valued today as many fight to have the basics, a job, food, a safe place to live.

Payne says leaving poverty requires more resources than finances, and those resources are significant to the accomplishments of an individual. The resources that Payne lists as resources necessary for escaping poverty are emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, and relationships/role models. Payne says that emotional

³⁶ Ruby K. Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty, fourth revised edition* (Highlands, TX.: aha! Process, Inc., 1996), 4.

³⁷ Ibid., 8.

resources are the most important because they help an individual get through the tough times, utilizing experiences and memories to overcome. Mental resources are related to what one would call common sense, taking advantage of systems instead of being taken advantage of. Spiritual resources are the acknowledgement of God or a higher power and with that realization to know that life has purpose.

A physical resource is the gift of being able-bodied, capable of carrying out tasks on one's own. Support systems are important for survival, the ability to rely on another for advice, to pick up the slack, or to be there when you can't. In generations past, grandma would watch the grandchildren because she was retired and lived nearby, but in the age of the nuclear family she lives in another state and who do you trust? Who is the back up? Payne says that role models and relationships are resources and I agree. So often in challenged communities where there are so many single-parent households, it is difficult to find a role model that will guide children away from trouble. I had the pleasure of speaking to young adults at a junior high school for career day. In a discussion with the kids I asked who their role models were. I received varied answers some were famous some infamous, and one young man said that his father was his role model. I asked him what his father did, and he replied he was in jail.

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu takes issue with Payne in his book *An African Centered Response to Ruby Payne's Poverty Theory*. Kunjufu believes that if there is to be a discussion on poverty it must include racism and capitalization, which he believes are the integral components of poverty. "I believe capitalism creates poverty. Poverty is caused by the richest country in the world not providing a livable minimum wage. You can't take

care of a family of four with minimum wage."³⁸ Kunjufu points out that for some professions there is a disparity in salary where educated individuals may earn less than less educated individuals. "Why is the truck driver with his high school diploma paid \$20 an hour and the administrative assistant with a degree and has mastered Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint and numerous other software programs only paid \$10 an hour?"³⁹ If we add the fact that many college graduates have student loan debt which will require a portion of their salary to repay the debt then we can understand how so many individuals can find themselves without savings to survive beyond a couple of paychecks.

If future generations are to escape poverty they must be educated. Education is the framework that allows societies to develop and grow. In the Black community from the time of slavery forward each generation that was able to become more literate and raise the level of education was also able to raise their family's standard of living. Proof of how lives were changed through education was seen in North Tulsa, Oklahoma and its business community that was referred to as Black Wall Street in 1921. "The district was called Black Wall Street because more than 600 Black owned businesses flourished, including banks and oil, insurance, and real estate companies. Lawyers and doctors, libraries, hospitals, hotels, schools, theaters and restaurants flourished."⁴⁰ Equally as impressive was the Hayti District in the town of Durham North Carolina. The Hayti District was settled by Blacks after the Civil War in an area that was used as a labor pool

³⁸ Jawanza Kunjufu, *An African Centered Response to Ruby Payne's Poverty Theory* (Chicago: African American Images, 2007), 13.

³⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 38.

for Durham's tobacco warehouses.⁴¹ Hayti became home to the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Co., Lincoln Hospital and North Carolina College for Negroes, which later became North Carolina Central University, founded in 1910. Hayti became a refuge for Blacks during segregation and other businesses such as the Biltmore Hotel and the Regal Theatre where entertainers such as Cab Calloway and Louis Armstrong performed, thrived during this period.

In a predominately black and Hispanic community that has struggled to move beyond the realities of racism, poverty and drugs, the education of youth in Bed-Stuy must be nurtured and cultivated to create adults capable of maintaining a level of sustainability by operating businesses and owning their own homes such as the entrepreneurs in Tulsa and in Hayti. "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education."⁴² This quote by Dr. King was taken from an article written for the Morehouse College Student paper, *The Maroon Tiger*, King was distressed by the politics of the late Governor of Georgia Eugene Talmadge which were prejudicial against blacks, which caused the higher education system to lose accreditation. King could not understand how such a well-educated man as Talmadge could hold such narrow minded views against blacks and undermine the education system in order to hold them back.

The youth of Bed-Stuy must be educated to think critically and develop character as Dr. King pointed out. One way for this to occur is for the money spent on education in urban areas to be equal to the monies spent on children in the suburbs. There are 50

⁴¹ Hayti District, www.ibiblio.org/hayti/background.html (accessed January 31, 2014).

⁴² BrainyQuotes.com, www.brainyquotes.com/quotes/quotes/m/martinluther.402936.html (accessed February 1, 2014).

elementary and secondary schools in Bed-Stuy, including public, private and charter schools. On a rating scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the best, only one school, Bedford Academy received a score of 9, three schools received a score of 8, and the numbers go down as 28 schools received between 3 and 1, the lowest score available. Six schools received a grade of 1.⁴³ The 28 schools in the 3 to 1 rating indicate an alarming number of schools considered under performing in the area and there must be a great effort to turn these schools around for the future of the children. One of the things that would help is the access to financial resources that might help bridge the gap.

In 2012 a report from the Center for American Progress detailed the funding inequity.

Inequitable funding of U.S. public schools contribute significantly to the under achievement of our low income and minority students. It's something we have to fix as a society. The study's authors, Rutgers professor Bruce Baker and NYU associate professor Sean Corcoran identify six states-Illinois, Texas, New York, Pennsylvania, Missouri and North Carolina-where combined state and local revenues and school resources are considerably lower in higher-poverty districts than they are in lower-poverty districts.

In 1993, New York City Council Member Robert Jackson was one of the plaintiffs in a lawsuit filed by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity against New York State. The lawsuit argued that New York State funding allocation methods for public education did not provide adequately for New York City children and violated both the New York State Constitution and the Civil Rights Act. Then Governor George Pataki opposed the lawsuit claiming no disparity. The New York State of Appeals ruled in favor of Jackson and the plaintiff in 2003. As a concerned parent Jackson fought for equality for the

⁴³ Zillow, www.zillow.com/bedfordstuyvesant-newyork-ny/schools (accessed February 8, 2014).

⁴⁴ "Public School Funding Unequal: State and Local School Finance Systems Perpetuate Per-Student Disparities," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/20/state-and-local-school-fi_n_1898225.html (accessed, February 28, 2014).

finances to give the children of New York City a chance in the 1993 lawsuit. In 2012 the Center for American Progress named New York State as one of the states that is still short changing children, proving that winning in court may have been only the beginning of the battle and there will always be work to be done in securing our children's future.

The youth in this community and every urban community must learn more about King than the "I have a dream" segment of that speech and take advantage of the many rights he and others of the Civil Rights movement fought for in addition to their educational opportunities. Kunjufu desires to see a collective effort of parents, churches and educators working together to create a stronger educational environment.

I want to challenge parents, the larger community and churches. I want to recommend Bishop Williamson's concept of 'one church, one school.' There are 85,000 churches in Black America and less than 145,000 schools with African-American students. Every 5 church should adopt a school.

I agree with Kunjufu that many more churches can and should do more to help our youth. I have seen far too many lives wasted on street corners looking for the fast money obtained by selling drugs. I have gotten to know some of these young men, observed their operation from afar, seeing them strategically make their deals, and I wonder what they would be capable of if they were to use their brainpower for good. Where the churches are able an effort should be made to mentor young men and women especially those of single parent households who could utilize another level of accountability and concern.

One way of achieving greater results in the education system and give underachieving students motivation to compete is the elimination of tracking which is called detracking. Tracking is the process that places students into homogenous groups

⁴⁵ Jawanza Kunjufu, *An African Centered*, 153.

based on their abilities.⁴⁶ The process of detracking which allows underachieving students to be placed in heterogeneous groupings has had very good results when tried in the Rockville Centre School District in Long Island. "Before tracking only 23 percent of African Americans and Hispanics passed the first Regent's math exam. After abolishing tracking, the figure rose to 75 percent."⁴⁷ Attempting innovative, although controversial, methods of learning could spell success for more of the Bed-Stuy students. Moving away from the traditional methods, which leave many students bored and unchallenged, can offer youth and their parents hope that there is concern for their future.

As poverty is relative to hunger it is necessary for discussion. According to the *Feeding America* website one in six Americans face hunger, and especially for children the lack of proper nutrition is critical to their development. "Insufficient nutrition puts children at risk for illness and weakens their immune system. The immature immune systems of children, ages 0-5 make them especially vulnerable to nutritional deprivation and as a result, the ability to learn, grow and fight infections is adversely affected."⁴⁸ If we are able to find a way to feed the youngest of our poor and hungry, we give hope to future generations. My wife, who is a teacher, has told me how some children report to school without having eaten breakfast and how during the times of taking the standardized examinations, how important it is for children to have nourishment. Sometimes parents unfortunately may make the decision of sending their children to school with the thought that they will at least have lunch if they don't arrive in time for breakfast. Together on the

⁴⁶ Christy Harrell, "Detracking Schools: A lesson in Empowerment," posted 3 October 2007, <http://voices.yahoo.com/detracking-schools-lesson-empowerment-572930.html?cat=4> (accessed February 2, 2014).

⁴⁷ Jawanza Kunjufu, *An African Centered*, 155.

⁴⁸ Feeding America.org, www.feedingamerica.org. (accessed January 15, 2014).

days of the examination my wife and I have purchased bananas so that the children would be able to concentrate.

A discussion on poverty and hunger has to include homelessness. Homelessness is a problem in New York City, and especially in the Bed-Stuy community. "The lasting effects of the recession and record numbers of homeless in New York City have heightened tension between the city's Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and neighborhoods that feel overburdened by shelters."⁴⁹ Bed-Stuy Community Board 3 has its share of housing for the homeless which seems unbalanced. This story written by Michael Copely, at the end of 2011, does not speak against the homeless but against the growing numbers of homeless in Bed-Stuy and how DSH lacks oversight over the growth.

Separate from the stock of DSH's traditional houses are independent facilities-gutted one and two family residences known as 'three quarter houses' that can sleep up to 40 adults and often violate city health and building codes. The majority of three-quarter houses are located in neighborhoods like Bedford- Stuyvesant-historically low income and predominately black and Latino, according to a 2008 report by Coalition for the Homeless.⁵⁰

In his book, *Open Our Eyes*, Kevin Hendricks humanizes the homeless by telling their stories to take the readers away from focusing on the issue that can polarize factions of people because they don't want to be inconvenienced by someone on the street. Just as the immigration issue has created negative buzz when people talk more about jobs being taken away from Americans than about what happens to human beings who are not American. Hendricks drives home a worthwhile point in consideration of the homeless when he says

⁴⁹ Michael Copely, "City's Transitional Housing for Homeless Lacks Oversight," <http://thebrooklynink.com/2011/12/28/39727-demanding-a-voice-in-homeless-services-the-public%E2%80%99s-struggle-to-be-heard/> (accessed January 29, 2014).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

... not only are the homeless invisible, but they're often voiceless. They often cannot defend themselves, both in theoretical and tangible ways. The homeless don't have lobbying organizations or lawyers to protect their civil rights. They're also vulnerable to all kinds of violence, from unkind words to physical attacks.⁵¹

Whether we have been formally introduced or not, whether we are aware of common interests or not, live in apartments, brownstones, condominiums or cardboard boxes, but for the grace of God there we are in the same position and have to develop empathy for the plight of others.

I have begun to do an informal count of group homes of diverse groups in the Bed-Stuy community within six blocks of my home. I have noticed two homes for former substance abuse clients, two for clients with mental illness, and one for troubled teens. With the New York State facility for adolescent males and a NYS sponsored alcoholism treatment center within a six block radius, it becomes apparent that "NIMBY", an acronym for Not In My Back Yard, is not at work. Should there be loud protests and hostility towards these groups? That is not the style of this community but it is important to discuss the disparity of these groups in Bed-Stuy.

We continue to ask that strict attention be paid to the concentration of facilities that are placed in one geographic area. Bedford Stuyvesant is a largely residential community and if we continue to make every vacant house a facility, at least allow them to permanent housing as opposed to transitional. When persons are placed in an assisted environment, make it possible for them to have the dignity of knowing it will be permanent and they will be able to stay. This way the existing residents and the newly placed residents all will have ownership and we will continue to be a close knit residential community. We do not want to be known as a blighted ghetto of sheltering systems.⁵²

It is helpful to understand what issues these individuals bring to the community and how the community can help eliminate barriers.

⁵¹ Kevin D. Hendricks, ed., *Open Our Eyes, Seeing the Invisible People of Homelessness* (St. Paul: Monkey Outta Nowhere, 2010), 100.

⁵² Department of City Planning, City of New York, "District Needs Statement Fiscal Year 2014," http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/neigh_info/bk03_info.shtml (accessed January 31, 2014).

As an adolescent I grew up in Bed-Stuy when drugs were as big a threat as racism. So many of my associates tried to get their high by smoking marijuana and what was called skin-popping. Skin-popping was an alternative to shooting heroin. Heroin addicts were known to put needles into their veins to rush the drug into their blood stream, while skin-poppers went under the skin. The reality was the same however, and an addict is still an addict. Crack cocaine was the next invader into the neighborhood that had the same life destroying properties, causing men and women to steal, kill and destroy in order to relive that elusive first high. So many families were negatively impacted by the selling and using of drugs in the community.

Using drugs or not isn't about willpower or character. Most problematic drug use is related to stress, trauma, genetic predisposition, mild or serious mental illness, use at an early age, or some combination of those. Even in their relentless destruction and self-destruction, the addicted aren't bad people. They're gravely ill; afflicted with a chronic, progressive, and often terminal disease.⁵³

The author of the previous quote David Sheff lived through the pain of addiction with his son who was addicted to many types of drugs. I also believe as Sheff does that addiction does not solely affect the individual, but impacts the family and is a family disease. Where I differ from Sheff is that addiction was America's greatest tragedy, long before drugs, greed, exploitation and capitalism were active in America and compassion and caring were taken out of the equation. When someone decided to market illegal drugs capitalizing on the human weakness to resist, it was just one more option in the continuum of marketing human frailty.

As an EAP Coordinator (Employee Assistance Program) for New York State, I have had employees come and speak to me about being addicted to drugs and alcohol and

⁵³ David Sheff, *Clean, Overcoming Addiction and Ending America's Greatest Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013), Preface.

needing help. Help is not only providing a referral to a substance abuse clinic, but to assess the triggers that causes the abuse and implement short term goals to help regain control. My first referral was a man who admitted to smoking crack and wanted to see how I would process the information before he told me he had a drinking problem as well. I later found that many addicts have a primary and secondary addiction. Nancy Reagan's campaign of "just say no" was not, nor will it ever be, the answer to dealing with addiction. Eliminating the predators, those who gain financially from the suffering of others would be a good start, but it is impossible to kill the snake without cutting off the head.

Mental illness is not an isolated situation that happens in poor families just as dysfunction is not an issue only occurring in inner cities.

Mental illnesses are shockingly common; they affect almost every American family. It can happen to a child, a brother, a grandparent, or a co-worker. No community is unaffected by mental illnesses; no school or workplace is untouched.⁵⁴

A recent commercial with actress Glen Close and other well-known actors and actresses standing alongside their loved ones who have on tee shirts depicting their mental illness creates conversation about an issue that deserves discussion.

Mental illness may be a touchy subject, but daily our lives are touched in every community by someone who is unable to cope and deal with the pain that lashes out and causes others to pay for that pain. Adam Lanza, a twenty year old man from Newtown, Connecticut, killed twenty children and six adults including his mother. This horrific incident and others like it remind us that ignoring our quirky, odd, neighbors is not going to make the issue of mental illness go away, neither will making someone feel odd or out

⁵⁴ Tom Smith, *A Balanced Life, Strategies for Coping with the Mental Health Problems of a Loved One* (Minnesota: Hazeldon, 2008), 1.

of place; it is important to be aware of our neighbors and their issues, not to be alarmists but perhaps to lend a hand. "Research shows that the most effective way to reduce stigma is through personal contact with someone with a mental illness. Family and friends can help transform this societal stigma into acceptance and understanding."⁵⁵

Congregations will find that mental illness can present itself in the church and how the church responds can be critical to those who may be unaware. "Mental illness is a frightening experience, not only for the afflicted but also for those who witness an individual with strange thoughts and behaviors. An estimated 26.2 percent of Americans ages eighteen and older (one in four adults) suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. Centuries of tension between the church and the scientific community have made pastors and laypeople alike wary of adopting scientific explanations for behaviors and thoughts that on the surface, may appear to be sinful (e.g. , suicidal ideations) .⁵⁶ Through the years I have met individuals in church who may have had some form of mental illness. One young man whom I will call Jim had issues with self-esteem and depression. Jim would be happy and confident one moment and the next unsure and negative the next. Jim would call me and talk about his desire to preach because in his words he was full of the Word of God, and the next time we spoke he was wondering why God didn't love him. He was also anxious to be married and have a family. I reminded him that marriage was work and he needed to prepare for that kind of step. I spent a great deal of time assuring him that God loved him and he needed to find balance to make his life complete.

⁵⁵ Smith, *A Balanced Life*, 53.

⁵⁶ Matthew S. Stanford, *Grace for the Afflicted, a Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2008), 4.

Over a period of a few years and a continual battle of God loves me/God hates me; I decided to approach Jim about seeking a Christian Counselor to discuss his issues. Jim became defensive and asked me if I believed he was crazy. I told him that I was only concerned about his well-being and thought that seeking professional help would help him more than talking to me since I had no clinical background.

Jim cut off his communication with me for some time, and when he reached out to me again he told me that he had been in counseling with his pastor. I asked if his pastor had a clinical background he said he was unsure, so I recommended professional counseling again. Jim shared that his mother had a life long battle with depression and he was reluctant to see someone. I tried to reassure Jim once again that counseling wasn't an admission of insanity and suggested that if he wanted to have balance he needed to become more stable in his moods. He didn't call any more. I continue to pray for him and hope that he comes to the realization that God loves him so much that he sent me to take the risk to tell him that there was additional help he should seek.

As new neighbors move into Bed-Stuy, many are young explorers working on their first jobs, experiencing their first time out on their own and generally looking to establish themselves. Bed-Stuy is an older community with many second generation homeowners occupying homes that belonged to their parents. On my block there are several homeowners that fit that description including me. There are several homeowners in their seventies and eighties who have witnessed the transformation of the block and neighborhood.

Senior citizens sixty five and older in Community Board 3 comprise 9.6% of the population in a three year survey from 2008-2010.⁵⁷ Many of these men and women utilized their productive years working, purchasing homes and raising their families in this neighborhood. They deserve credit and appreciation for staying through the tough times of the sixties and seventies, the lean years and protection from a society that values less and less the contributions of the pioneers.

The senior population of Community Board 3 continues to be a major concern. This is an area where nothing has changed. Our newest issue is that several of the seniors have been closed. Seniors are being displaced because they can no longer afford to age in place. We have to guarantee steps to keep the people that helped build this community right here. They are unable to afford rents or unable to get into senior housing in their very own neighborhood. Some of our golden residents cannot procure housing because they have too much income while others do not have enough. Some of our aged neighbors are ill and or disabled and need some sort of assisted living facility within the confines of Bedford Stuyvesant. It is a travesty to have to move seniors out of their neighborhood they have lived in their entire life, raised their children and grandchildren in.⁵⁸

Many of the seniors are out and about taking care of tasks for themselves such as going to the grocery store or the post office, while other seniors have become invisible people due to their inability to ambulate as well as they used to or have other disabilities and illnesses that keep them indoors, and as the saying goes out of sight out of mind.

In highly competitive modern industrialized societies such as our own senior members of the community often tend to be narrowly defined as *the elderly* and, as a result of this labeling, seniors become effectively marginalized from activities of the mainstream, and their potential contributions to society become lost for both present and future generations.⁵⁹

One of my neighbors is about ninety three years old and goes out every day to do something. She says she has arthritis and walks with the aid of a cane but refuses to allow

⁵⁷ Department of City Planning, City of New York, "District Needs Statement Fiscal Year 2014," http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/neigh_info/bk03_info.shtml (accessed February 11, 2014).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ John P. Kretzmann and John McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out, a Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Skokie, IL: ACTA Publications, 1993), 51.

that to hold her back. I have told her many times how much I admire her and have a desire to be as productive as she is as I move toward my senior years.

There is a senior center on Lexington Avenue called the Jacqueline Hernandez Adult Day Health Center, named after former major league baseball player Keith Hernandez' mother. The center provides day services for the elderly and disabled that allow them to get out of the home to socialize and allow caregivers, whose lives can be extremely stressful, an opportunity to carry out important functions of their own lives. The center provides the following services; medical and nursing services, hot meals, physical, occupational and speech therapy, bi-lingual staff (Spanish and English), social service assistance to aid in community referrals and nutritional services. My longtime neighbor who lived across the street was suffering from dementia and having difficulty maintain her quality of life causing her daughters to become her care givers. One of the daughters found out about the Hernandez Center and enrolled her mother there during the hours she worked. The activities that the mother took part in and the care she received there made mom less anxious in the evening allowing her to rest better through the night gave the daughters respite as well.

It is important to hear from the seniors in the community to learn what they have been through, the history they have witnessed and how life is for them in the present. Engaging seniors and just listening to them honors them in way that many don't understand. As their contemporaries and family members die, sometimes they are left with few opportunities to talk to someone who will take time to listen. Churches that provide pick-up service to elderly congregants are helping those members who are still vital but lack transportation to get to the house of worship and stay a part of that worship

community. Consideration for the elderly and senior citizens of our communities is as important as it was for the deacons in the book of Acts to look after the widows in their day. There is a chance that the elderly's experiences will become ours and those who are able to advocate and lobby through groups such as AARP, may avoid some of the pitfalls of aging in America.

CHAPTER 3

VETTING THE OTHER SIDE

The second part of my project was to identify community agencies and organizations which meet the needs of the Bed-Stuy community. The needs of the community vary and cover such areas as mental health, HIV/AIDS, hunger, homelessness, substance abuse, senior citizens resources, veteran's assistance and child care. Identification of these agencies was to be done by old fashioned leg work to get out and meet the individuals who operate the projects, assess the operation and establish a relationship for future referrals.

If the mission of the church is to be a part of the community and assist those in need, then human services agencies and organizations which also provide services to that constituency should be in dialogue and finding a way to help one another. I began my search at St. John's Bread and Life, which is a block away from my home. It was established in 1982 by St. John's the Baptist Parish, which is also in the Bed-Stuy community, and recently was placed under the control of St. John's University by the Diocese of Brooklyn. I knew that the program had a soup kitchen that served two meals, breakfast and lunch in addition to other services that I wanted to learn about. I went for breakfast around 7:15 AM, hoping to see the operation first hand. I saw a partially organized line of people in front of the building waiting to get inside. It was a diverse

group; Black, Hispanic, Asian, and those with mental health and substance abuse issues. Several who gathered seemed to be regulars and know each other as they joked and laughed.

I asked one gentleman what time they opened, he told me any minute. I then asked him if he came often and he didn't answer, so I just waited quietly. Once inside I began to look for someone to speak to about the programs. While waiting for a gentleman who was assisting a short line of people at the information desk, I began to read the message boards for insight to what was going on at the huge two story building that was a factory when I was a teenager. I was surprised to see so many things happening, for example a food pantry for senior citizens on Fridays. I later learned that this service allowed the seniors to move at their own pace, without the crowds that could develop.

After speaking to a gentleman at the information desk, he told me I could speak to Jennifer, who would tell me about the programs. While waiting for Jennifer, I observed breakfast. Prior to the actual breakfast being served, coffee, tea and juice were served. There was conversation going on by the regulars and no confusion about the process. I was told I could go upstairs to see Jennifer, so I went to locate her, found her assisting an individual, and I waited and observed. I finally was able to meet her and explained my project. I found that Jennifer was the Volunteer Coordinator, putting willing workers in place. She shared the mission of St. John's not only being a food program but so much more.

I found that there was an identification program that helped individuals get important documents such as birth certificates, social security cards, and non driver's identification, which is provided by St. John's University students. There are some of the

individuals there who receive their mail at St. Johns, there may be trust issues where they stay or homeless, and as I discovered you will not get some services if you have no address. While on tour of the facilities, I observed the food pantry and the system for food delivery. The clients go to a kiosk, select their items get a receipt and pick them up. The use of the kiosk eliminates waste that can occur when items are pre packed.

As we continued the tour I noticed there was an office for medical staff that came in a couple of times a week to help with medical issues including diabetes, hypertension, HIV and T.B. testing. There is a library, computer room with six computers, a demonstration kitchen, where individuals are taught how to prepare quick meals, an area that was being converted to classroom space, where GED preparation would be taught and a chapel. There were cubicles where case workers sat and assisted individuals with legal services, immigration matters, tax return preparation, public assistance, food stamps and Medicaid. There is some documentation required for some of the services. These services are free and available because St. John Bread and Life is registered as a Single Stop Site.⁶⁰

Jennifer also informed me that there is a mobile soup kitchen that delivers meals on weekday mornings to various locations across Brooklyn. Jennifer told me that there were around six hundred meals a day served between the onsite facility and the mobile truck and over 600, 000 meals a year. Many of the staff that I met, including the volunteers, were friendly, engaging and eager to help, unlike my experience at a Public Assistance office, where the atmosphere was toxic and most of the people there, clients and employees alike did not want to be there.

⁶⁰ A Single Stop site is a human service location that is certified to offer multiple services to the community.

I also had the opportunity to visit the Golden Age Adult Daycare Program for individuals who had some mental health issues or disabilities. To those who qualified, free services included meals, a recreation area with a pool table, arts and crafts room, laundry services, nail salon, barber shop, exercise area and classes for nutrition and medication. The CEO, Russell, also showed me an area he was developing in the back for a deck and picnic tables. There was also a computer room to teach individuals the necessary skills to operate them.

Many adults with disabilities need a place to socialize and be active, and their loved ones and caregivers become frustrated with services that don't provide an environment that allows for growth. This type of setting, which is becoming more available, gives those who were previously homebound in many cases an opportunity for access to a new community.

There was a long period between the Vietnam War and Operation Desert Storm (conflicts that required the Armed Forces of the United States to send men and women into combat). The veterans of Vietnam did not come back to the hero's welcome of previous vets, and did not get the support that was necessary to return to civilian life. Muhammad Ali lost three years of his career because he refused to fight in a war he did not believe in. Thousands of others who did not believe, but could not fight back through the courts, lost arms, legs, mental stability, and their lives in defense of America. At home, families, relationships, careers, dignity, and more mental stability were lost. This was the plight of the Vietnam vet.

In a predominately Black community, the Black vets returning home from the Vietnam War had an impact. Families were torn apart due to the men that couldn't cope

with a war that was not embraced by America. The U.S. government did not acknowledge Agent Orange, an herbicide used against the Vietnamese, but also impacted U.S. troops for decades later. "U.S. involvement in Viet Nam ended in 1973, but effects of nearly two decades of chemical warfare are still being felt by American veterans today. Exposure to the dangerous herbicide Agent Orange has been linked to a 52 percent overall risk of prostate cancer in Vietnam veterans, according to an analysis published in the American Cancer Society Journal."⁶¹

I had the opportunity to visit Black Veterans for Social Justice Inc. (BVSJ) which has been in existence since 1979. It is an organization dedicated to helping all veterans and their families live better lives by promoting several areas of assistance such as; supported housing, homeless veteran's reintegration, job search, referrals for child care, moving costs and interview clothing. BVSJ serves about 5,000 clients a year. They also maintain 200 units of permanent housing, offers health screenings for HIV/AIDS, and a prison outreach program. Having worked with a few Vietnam and Iraq war veterans, some who were deployed more than once, they deserve better than the whispers they sometimes get because some think they are time bombs about to explode due to PTSD.

The need for housing and affordable housing is an issue in Bed-Stuy and New York City as well. A greater issue exists for individuals with disabilities. The average home owner is reluctant to rent to those who may create problems or appear to have shortcomings. Our Lady of Good Counsel SRO (single room occupancy) on Madison St. offers housing to those who suffer from mental illness, have Section 8 vouchers, or

⁶¹ Jeffrey Kopman, "Agent Orange: A Red Alert for Aggressive Prostate Cancer," <http://www.everydayhealth.com/prostate-cancer/agent-orange-a-red-alert-for-aggressive-prostate-cancer-4096.aspx> (accessed January 18, 2014).

seeking transitional housing. In addition to these services they offer social workers who assist clients with substance abuse treatment services.

As I drive and walk through the Bed-Stuy community I have seen a growing number of food pantries that are mostly run by churches. Church of the Open Door on Green Ave. has the largest operation I have seen. The church sits in the middle of the block and on Saturdays lines form half way down the street on either side of the church doors with people and their shopping carts waiting to be served. The scene is both encouraging and disheartening when I am glad that the church has produced such a great outreach program, but that so many in the community are in need of assistance to make ends meet.

The Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger (BSCAH) developed out of the need to support the community's hungry. According to its website, BSCAH has become Brooklyn's largest food pantry and provides the basic "staples of a well-balanced diet to more than 12,000, unduplicated, low-income individuals a month."⁶² BSCAH is somewhat unique in that it permits individuals to select food items including fruits, vegetables, meats and other items as opposed to the traditional pre-loaded bag of items that could contain items the individuals may not want.

I met with BSCAH's Director, Ms. Dawson, who when I arrived at the Fulton St. location was working side by side with her staff assisting the customers in a tiny office space only able to seat about twenty or so individuals. The pantry is located a couple of doors down. Ms. Dawson informed me that the program has been in existence for fifteen years assisting residents of the neighborhood receive healthy food and services to help

⁶² Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger, <http://bedstuyagainsthunger.org/about-us/bscah-101/> (accessed January 16, 2014)

them live better lives. Through the interview I learned that there are several paid staff, such as social workers and many more volunteers supporting the operation. Some of the services offered at the program are; food stamp enrollment, assistance with the Affordable Care initiative (otherwise known as Obama Care), free income tax preparation, healthy eating classes (space provided by Full Gospel Church across the street), assistance with housing and financial planning.

Ms. Dawson explained that BSCAH offers a holistic approach to assist her customers and she said that if someone comes through the doors needing something that is not offered by the program they will assist in finding those services. Customer's receiving pantry services come in once a month and receive food staples for nine meals and may come in weekly for fresh produce. No one is turned away from the program, and as Ms. Dawson explained that at different times even people who may have what would be an adequate salary may find that once the bills and obligations are met there may not be enough left for food. Single moms and other working individuals take part in the program by providing proof of family size.

Ms. Dawson explained that in addition to the services provided for approximately 25,000 people a month (calculated by the formula that one person represents 3.7 in family size), that many more have been helped outside of the Bed-Stuy community since Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Mobile pantries from BSCAH have distributed food to many left in the dark and cold after Sandy wreaked havoc in Brooklyn and Far Rockaway. As a result of the need that still exists, BSCAH is rolling out a mobile office three days a week in Brooklyn and Queens to assist residents who need assistance. BSCAH does not

advertise. Ms. Dawson said that word of mouth has provided the customer base, and they promote fund raising events and grants to support the program.

CHAPTER 4

COLLABORATION

Exploring the issues of the neighbors in Bed-Stuy and bearing in mind that the church with an outreach ministry and community organizations at times will have the same clientele; it would be advantageous for them to work together in a collaborative effort. "How are collaborations formed? Through someone's initiation, through someone's directive, or through legal mandate. However they begin, collaborations require patience, creativity and sophisticated skills with people. Patience is especially called for if we are to commit to collaboration. To build that commitment we need two crucial items; a change in our thinking and a common language, one gives us new symbols of what is important."⁶³ Carl Dudley points out that most of the faith based organizations are small and lack the expertise to manage larger sums of finances awarded in grants. Partnering with established organizations or other churches that have laid the ground work for successful operations will help community outreach ministries gain the needed experience to accomplish their goals.

The Brooklyn District Attorney's Office and the New York City Police Department have established several programs that work with churches, religious and community organizations to promote better relationships with law enforcement. The

⁶³ Michael Winer and Karen Ray, *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey* (Saint Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2002), 26.

NYPD has the Clergy Liaison Program which "formalizes the relationship between members of the clergy, their congregations and the police department, especially during times of community crisis or unrest.⁶⁴ The program also allows the precinct commander to appoint up to five clergy of different denominations to act as links between the NYPD, congregations and faith groups within that community. Clergy that participate in the program receive training from the department in the areas of domestic violence, counter-terrorism, bias crime prevention and drug abuse prevention.

The program ComALERT which stands for Community and Law Enforcement Resources Together is a reentry program in Brooklyn which provides employment, substance abuse treatment and housing for parolees in their transitional period. The goal of the program is to reduce recidivism by providing the parolees the tools and supports to return to their communities successfully. Parolees report to the ComALERT Reentry Center in downtown Brooklyn and receive assistance from social workers and CASAC (Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor) assistance. The program lasts for three to six months and parolees have individual and group therapy sessions. In collaboration with ComALERT is Ready Willing and Able which is a comprehensive program that assists with job readiness, transitional housing, and courses in life skills and financial management. These programs work with the NYS Division of Parole, which provides the referrals and the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office which created the program.

⁶⁴ NYC.gov, NYPD New York's Finest, http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/community_affairs/special_outreach_programs.shtml (accessed January 25, 2014).

I had the opportunity to interview Bishop Ronnie I. Eggleston, Senior Pastor of Ephraim Judah International Ministries on Putnam Avenue in Bed-Stuy, concerning ministry in the community.

How long have you been pastor of your congregation, and why did you come to the neighborhood?

We have been in this location for four years and we are in Bed-Stuy because we believe that God placed us there. I believe we are called to minister to a diverse congregation, and the shifting population in Bed-Stuy, where we are seeing Hispanics, Asians and Arabs come into the community and in recognizing the shift I believe we are prepared to address the issues that present themselves.

What organizations are you affiliated with/in the Bed-Stuy area?

I am a board member of the Brooklyn Council of Churches, member of the African-American Clergy and Elected Officials, mentor through the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office Project Redirect, which is a program that provides an alternative to incarceration for former gang members. We are also partners with St. Phillip's Christian Church in Bed-Stuy with a program called Health Matters/ Faith and Fitness which provides introductory classes in yoga, Zumba, healthy eating, and meditation. We are inspired by the Grace Covenant which involves five principals; daily devotion, exercise, eating timely, healthy meals, getting rest, and taking vacations. Ephraim Judah Ministries has a CDC (Community Development Corporation) called Living Water a program formed to help build a community youth center with the purpose of offering a safe outlet for youth.

How is Ephraim Judah Ministries assisting in community outreach?

By working with the local precinct to improve relationships with the police department and working with the Community Affairs officer, and hosting an annual block party.

What issues have you encountered in the Bed-Stuy community?

The youth in the community have few safe places where they can go, which is why we are looking to open the youth center. We also have noticed prostitution at the Bed-Stuy and Bushwick neighborhood borderline, and we are working with the Brooklyn DA's office to curtail those activities.

The collaboration between the Brooklyn District Attorney's office, New York City Police Department and local churches give an example of how choosing a project and a certain segment of the public that have mutual benefit to multiple parties can eliminate barriers that have existed for a period of time and begin to restore trust between those parties. The collaboration between these groups is helping families and communities rebuild relationships that were torn apart by drugs and incarceration. The success of these programs depends on the individuals who violated the law as well as the entities that practice restorative justice

CHAPTER 5

CAN IT BE APATHY?

In preparation for the church/community meet and greet event, which was to be the culmination of visiting the community agencies and organizations, and having an event where the local churches would be in attendance, I encountered problems along the way. A couple of my site team members who were going to share the task of visiting the agencies developed physical ailments and were unable to participate in the assignment and another had increased job responsibilities and could not find the time to do the legwork necessary. That meant that I had to redouble my efforts to visit more locations. There is a saying in the church that twenty percent of the members do eighty percent of the work, as a church leader for many years I found that to be very true.

I experienced glitches in having the fliers prepared and finding the right language to be used to gain the attention of church leaders to see that there was a worthwhile purpose for this effort. I took time off from work to deliver the fliers to churches in the Bed-Stuy area. The first church was not too far from my home, and there was another church across the street. As I approached the Spanish church, I began to look for the mailbox. The church was located on a corner, so I looked on both the front and the side for the mailbox. I couldn't find one. I looked at the door for a slot, but there was no visible slot. There was no room under the door so I was unable to leave a flier. The church across the street had a high fence around it, but the gate was open and I was able to find the mailbox and leave the flier.

I later drove past another church with a similar gate surrounding it. I found that there was no way to get to the mailbox due to the locked gate. I wondered how they received their mail. I also wondered if the fence kept those who needed help out too. Was there someone who could legitimately be in need, but like me saw no point of entry at the space that was supposed to provide sanctuary? My trip did provide a couple of churches with slots in the doors or mailboxes for me to leave the fliers.

One Sunday morning I was up early and decided to give out the fliers to those who opened the church or were there for Sunday school. That idea turned out well, as I was able to meet a couple of pastors and church members who were willing to pass the fliers on to their leadership. Since my goal for this project was to make as many personal contacts as necessary, I felt I made a connection through my visits. My initial date to hold the event was early October, but due to the inability to have as many sites visited as I would have liked, we finally had to schedule the event for the second Saturday in December. However, this date could result in the individuals I met in my trips to the agencies and organizations, not remembering who I was, and the weather could play a role in successful attendance. I believe both things occurred.

Out of the two dozen letters I sent to the agencies and organizations, I only received two phone calls of confirmation. I received the first response within a few days which gave me hope, and the second with about a week to go, which made me question my efforts and strategy. As leader of any project you ask the question did I choose the right people for the task and was I clear in my intentions? The jury is still out on those questions and as I have learned there has to be a backup plan in place. I did not receive

any more responses for the event from the agencies and none from the fliers given to the churches.

Two days before the event there was a report of snow, I felt I could not cancel the event in case there were people who would just show up and with the weather becoming less predictable with winter approaching I saw that it may be my last opportunity. Friday before the event, the forecast was for the snow to arrive around noon so I had hope that since we were to start at 9:30 AM, we would be on our way out by the time the snow began falling. I received a call from the first agency to cancel due to the weather, the second call from a child care agency asked if we were still holding the event and advised that a representative would attend.

The morning of the event was dark and did not appear as if the skies would brighten. Every now and then the weather person gets it right! The event was being held at the church next door to my home, so my family and I began to take the items over for the continental breakfast. As I began the short walk from my home to the church I looked up and saw it was beginning to snow. If I had any hope that more people would show it left with the first flakes. My site team arrived to help with the setting up of the church basement, and then we waited, and waited. I received a phone call around ten that the owner of the daycare was outside unclear of which entrance to use. I went out and escorted her in. She brought a friend along who was a part of Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network. After introductions we began a discussion on the purpose of the event and my belief of the importance of knowing our neighbors and how that knowledge helps enlighten others in need. We also had a discussion about the educational system and how we could help children in the community. Ms. Jones from the National

Action Network talked to us about participating in a local chapter of the network and how it might enable us to get the message out concerning bringing the agencies and the churches together.

None of the churches responded with a call or attended the event. One of my site team members pointed out that since neither the church nor did I have name recognition, some decided to pass on the event. I knew the weather was a major factor for some but had not considered the issue of prominence. I thought about the reason that I believed that this project was necessary and I am even further persuaded that there is a great need to have this part of the project attempted again.

A couple of things that I would do differently is to organize four or five churches to take part in and promote the event and utilize social media in a more effective manner. No one else on my site team discussed the idea of social media which surprises me since many of them utilize it. My hesitancy to be more active with social potentially hindered my ability to gain more notice for the event.

CHAPTER 6

BUILDING MORE BRIDGES

The question remaining, from the disappointing attempt to bring two sides together, is how can we build new and strengthen existing partnerships between the church and community on the way to better assist the disenfranchised and disinherited? Howard Thurman points out in *Jesus and the Disinherited* that "Jesus was a member of a minority group in the midst of a larger dominant controlling group."⁶⁵ His words were of no comfort to the Roman government or the ruling party of Jews, no, his words were to build a platform for the Kingdom of Heaven and empower his followers. That power healed the man with the withered hand in Mark 3:1-6. The man with the withered hand was disabled and was not part of an elite group. I doubt if the Pharisees or the Herodians would have looked to kill Jesus if he had healed one of them on the Sabbath. Jesus was building a bridge between the ruling powers and the disenfranchised, the poor, sick and even women who had been viewed as property. His compassion and love was the underpinning of that bridge that allowed his followers to cross over to the truth. Scripture supports the need for sensitivity for the human condition, a way to nurture it, and then acquire knowledge, education and understanding to accomplish the task.

Many agencies are constantly dealing with funding issues and in maintaining that funding to reach out to those who can provide financial resources. This does not mean that collaboration with the church is not necessary or important; in fact the opposite may

⁶⁵ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 18.

be true if an agency needs volunteers. The church that is looking to fulfill a purposeful outreach ministry can be useful. For example if there is a youth ministry looking to develop character in its young people, why not take them to a soup kitchen to volunteer. Schools should not be the only avenue for youth to perform community service. "Early Methodists developed schools, clinics, programs for the aged, and even cottage industries for unemployed. Their view of Christian discipleship called for giving food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, visiting or helping those sick or in prison. This tendency continues in the American church."⁶⁶

I had the opportunity to assist a school, whose focus was social justice that was renting space at my worksite in the Bronx, locate a church that had a clothing ministry. The students collected clothing as a part of learning how to give back to the community but had no relationship with a church to complete the task. I had a colleague who is a pastor in the Bronx, so I called his church and was informed that they would take the clothing and distribute it. The school required a letter of thanks from the church which I was able to obtain. Without communication, one entity would not know the other, so it becomes important to spread the word when services are needed or available to be provided.

Within the Pentecostal denomination there are deliverance ministries, churches that believe in the laying on of hands and healing the sick. When people have been healed in these churches they bring in others to experience healing also. My oldest son's godfather Louis was a drug addict healed by the power of God. Louis wanted others that he knew that were still caught in their addiction to be healed and find God through Jesus

⁶⁶ Carl S. Dudley, *Community Ministry, New Challenges, Proven Steps to Faith-Based Initiatives* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2002), 79.

as he did. One of the ways he tried to accomplish that was to go to jails and preach the Gospel to those who would be considered disinherited and disenfranchised. Another time Louis, his wife Bea and a small group from the church made sandwiches and went to a neighborhood in Harlem to feed the hungry. The neighborhood was an old hangout for Louis. Many of the hungry were drug addicts. I remember one man who was waiting in line for a sandwich telling one of his buddies that he had not eaten in days. While I was moved by that statement, I was shocked as I looked at the man's swollen hand clenching money, certainly enough money to buy a few meals with.

Louis found a way to get into the jails and minister to those in need. He found a church that was willing to open their doors and join us to stand out front and feed the hungry. Looking into ourselves and finding our passions for ministry, and then finding others who are already in the process of doing the work and could use extra sets of hands, leaves no reason not to try.

Is every church prepared for an outreach ministry? The simple answer is no, due to several factors. As a church start, long term occupation in a community may not be a reality, and finding a permanent home depends on growth and financial stability. Finding the identity of the congregation and workers willing to give of their time can be problematic. A friend in the music ministry once shared with me, as I was experiencing a fall off in my male chorus rehearsals, that I should never expect to find people who shared my vision with the same passion like I did. While it was painful to hear, I found it to be true and what keeps me awake at nights will not affect others and they will sleep peacefully. If the congregation is made of community members then they are more likely to see the issues and have a vested interest to see and work for change. For those who live

in other communities it may become more difficult to get the passion for an issue that does not affect them directly.

If a congregation can come together in recognizing a community need and understand that their reasonable service to God for God's generosity to them is to help someone find God's love, and that the church is more than a social club, then it can reap the satisfaction of being viable in the community where they were planted. Dudley calls it finding your ministry niche. "As these ministries touch the lives of individuals, families and community groups, they are naturally incorporated into the fabric of community care -- as churches want to help, others begin to expect it of them."⁶⁷ There are established churches that have space to provide services and have received money given to faith-based ministries and opened senior citizen programs. Many of the churches bring in community services such as nurses and doctors to provide medical screenings for hypertension and diabetes. These types of collaborations bring the services to individuals who may not otherwise seek them on a regular basis.

My cousin Terry is a minister beginning his life as pastor of a small flock of people in Jamaica, New York, one of the tougher neighborhoods in the city. Terry shared with me his life of substance abuse addiction from his early teens. I share his story as well as Louis' to illustrate how bridges can be made from individuals who have experienced challenges.

When did you begin your struggle with substance abuse?

At age seventeen.

Why do you feel you turned to drugs?

⁶⁷ Carl S. Dudley, *Community Ministry, New Challenges*, 143.

Because of low self-esteem, I was sexually abused as a child, had feelings of insecurity and abandonment issues. I kept these things a secret and developed trust issues.

What substances were you addicted to?

Alcohol, marijuana, crack cocaine, and heroin (snorted it).

What kind of problems did life present for you and your family?

I began stealing, lying, not being myself, not going to school. I would bring drug dealers to the house; I hung out with all kinds of negative people.

What caused you to hit bottom?

I was always able to get a job so I didn't see myself like everyone else, but while working at the airport my urine came up dirty for drugs and the union sent me to see the EAP counselor. He told me he could help me if I wanted to get clean, although I was going to lose my job. I told him no. I began to borrow money from people who thought I still had a job, I owed the dealers money and I realized I had no way to pay. I called the counselor and accepted his help. I went to a treatment program in Arizona, and began to turn my life around.

How long have you been clean and sober?

Twenty five years.

How do you maintain your clean life?

As Narcotics Anonymous (NA) teaches one day at a time; I attend meetings, have a sponsor, and practice what I call rigorous honesty about the past. I pray and spend time giving service to others.

How do you give back?

I am a sponsor, I help other recovering addicts, I work with young people trying to help them stay focused and out of trouble. I began a NA meeting in Jamaica at a Baptist church one night a week that grew to five nights and into the second largest meeting in NYC. International travelers from all over the world would look up the meeting and stop in.

Albert Vann, a Bed-Stuy politician who served the community tirelessly as a New York State Assemblyman and New York City Council person for the last thirty plus years, saw the need for the residents of Bed-Stuy to be represented by a group of community and nonprofit leaders that would come together to ensure the future of the neighborhood in 2002. The Bedford-Stuyvesant Economic and Physical Development Task Force was formed out of that effort with twenty five community organizations taking part. Working with Community Board 3 the Task Force served as a vehicle for

public officials, developers, community groups and other entities involved with economic and physical development to come for advice, feedback and support. In partnership with the Community Board, the Task Force also acted as guardian of the values and goals expressed in the Bedford-Stuyvesant Community's 197(a) Plan.

After the success of Task Force, the Coalition for the Improvement of Bedford Stuyvesant (CIBS) was formed in 2005. CIBS continues to partner with neighborhood nonprofit organizations that are dedicated to Bed-Stuy. Through its member organizations CIBS assists the community in diverse areas such as youth development, commercial revitalization, human services, foreclosure prevention and financial education. Providing vital support to the Bed-Stuy community CIBS serves thousands of residents annually. The Executive Committee's goal is to serve residents of Bed-Stuy from infancy to retirement. Some of its accomplishments are: the first Aging

⁶⁸ History, Coalition for the Improvement of Bedford-Stuyvesant, <http://www.cibsbedstuy.org/about/history/> (accessed February 7, 2014).

Improvement District outside Manhattan; the development of six thousand units of affordable living space, 476,000 square feet of commercial space and one thousand additional units of housing.⁶⁹ This type of collaborative effort keeps the neighborhood vital and convinces those interested in investing in Bed-Stuy that the neighborhood is fertile ground.

⁶⁹ About, Coalition for the Improvement of Bedford-Stuyvesant, <http://www.cibbedstuy.org/about/board> (accessed February 7, 2014).

CHAPTER 7

THE CHURCH AND CREATING COMMUNITY MINISTRY

In the sixth chapter of Acts we are introduced to the beginning of the church. The apostles called deacons to office to help create a more efficient way of serving the needs of the people, such as tending to the widows and ministering to the poor, while the apostles preached and brought people into the faith. The early rendering in Acts is a strong reminder that since the church represents the mission of Jesus to the world, its role should never be diminished in whatever community it serves and it should take an active role in the fight for social justice, and other societal ills. I wish to concentrate on some of the tasks that the deacons were assigned and how that work applies to the mission that the present church might have.

Jesus clearly demonstrated a ministry to those who were on the margins, the poor, sick, and voiceless. Jesus' earthly ministry created the foundation of the church and community ministry. In Matthew 5, Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount that spoke of blessing the poor in spirit, the meek among others to give hope to those who had little in terms of financial independence or material substance due to the oppression of the Roman government. "So deep and debilitating was the effect of impoverishment on the psycho-emotional health of his people that Jesus found it necessary to affirm their worth with the validation "Blessed are you who are poor" (Luke 6:20).⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Obery M. Hendricks Jr. *The Politics of Jesus*, 62.

While Jesus' ministry changed the lives and fortunes of many, there were no promises of instant riches to any, and his words to those who scoffed at the anointing of his feet by Mary with an expensive oil in lieu of using it to sell and use the profits for the poor was "for the poor you shall always have with you" (Matthew 26:11.) So there were still poor people and widows to help when the deacons were called to ministry. The church continued to take on such issues in the Middle Ages. "Tithing was a feature of life in the Middle Ages, and in England church funds secured from parishioners was divided: one-third for the maintenance of the church, one-third for the poor, and one third for the priests."⁷¹ These social issues were a part of the early church not in a pious way but in consideration for those less fortunate.

The local church that works to provide outreach services to the underserved has to be certain that it is equipped to handle that ministry. Carl Dudley, Professor of Church and Community at Hartford Institute for Religion Research, advises that the church find a comfortable fit between their social context and their congregational identity.⁷² By working within the area of that identity the local church is far more effective. I have seen several churches lose their effectiveness by working in areas that they did not have the resources to maintain. For example a church had an idea for a food pantry, but did not count the cost of having space to store perishables or the consistent human support to sustain the pantry over a long period.

The church must see itself as a community agency or organism that is living breathing and growing to help the lost and the sick find their way. The church that strives

⁷¹ Ralph Dolgoff and Donald Feldstein, *Understanding Social Welfare, A Search for Social Justice* (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. 2007), 41.

⁷² Carl S. Dudley, *Community Ministry: New Challenges*, 21.

for excellence should be guided by a holistic approach that ministers to the entire person soul, body and spirit. The people who met Jesus at the deserted area in Matthew 14:13-21 were ministered to and had no expectation of food. They would have been happy on their way home, but we read that Jesus had compassion on them and instructed the disciples to feed them. The disciples said let them go home and eat believing the task was impossible, but Jesus operating in a manner that was beyond their comprehension, met the needs of five thousand men, aside from the women and children.

How does the church become more than the building that is open on Sunday and Wednesday night for Bible study? Teaching discipleship for the purpose of making a difference is a first step. Belonging to any organization should be more than having a name on a membership roll, keeping the Ten Commandments is more important than knowing them and discipleship is more than having a tee shirt with the church name on it. Most discipleship classes are six to eight weeks long and then you get the right hand of fellowship. Jesus spent three years with his disciples teaching and pointing them in the right direction and at the crucifixion they were nowhere to be found. It took some time afterwards to get back to the mission that they were selected for.

Who should we disciple or help, remembering that everyone we speak to will not be converted and yet should not be ignored? By identifying people in the neighborhood by ethnicity, age, history and socio-economic background, we prepare ourselves for many of the questions that may be thrown our way as we take ministry beyond the doors of the church. The identification of the people in the neighborhood helps narrow the focus of the community ministry you want to develop. Are there any within the congregation who have expertise in that area or any contacts that might be able assist? If so, those people

can be team leaders offering guidance and direction. Bringing someone in from the outside to train congregants how to effectively deal with certain populations can be helpful also. Dudley points out that the committee that has come together for the project may have some internal feelings that may create friction within the group and need to be worked out. "Sometimes this is awkward for the committee as members discover their strong and sometimes controversial feelings about well-known citizens and particular segments of the community."⁷³ Team building sessions may be needed to develop more cohesiveness between the committee members.

The exploration of the community by preferably walking rather than driving is a great way to gather information. Assigning members zones with pen and paper accomplishes a few things. One, it familiarizes the member with the activities of the area. Two, it allows them to see what happens at a certain time. For example, if the church is near the business district foot traffic disappears after a certain time of the day and on weekends. Three, it provides the committee member a chance to locate the invisible people that won't blend into the background so easily. There are institutions, agencies, community development corporations, businesses, schools and hospitals that are in most communities that can be potential partners for the church and its outreach ministry.

Does the church have assets that the community entities can use in partnership? "Churches and other religious institutions are staffed by people who are not only well trained and educated but also who have many special skills and interests. These skills and

⁷³ Carl S. Dudley, *Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry* (Washington D.C.: The Alban Institute, 1991), 14.

interests can often be harnessed to help build communities in many ways."⁷⁴ Kretzmann and McKnight point out that the talents of these church members can be utilized in networking with the community where they have utilized their talents bringing together both worlds. Churches are capable of hiring companies from the community for renovation projects. There are risks to be taken in developing partnerships but they can develop into long lasting mutually beneficial relationships." Local religious institutions must be prepared to enter into a series of mutually beneficial "partnerships" if they are going to realize their full potential in the process of building a better community that is stronger both materially and spiritually."⁷⁵

Dudley also points out that every community has "invisible people" who, similar to the people Jesus spoke to on the Mount, were marginalized and forgotten. In many communities the homeless have become the forgotten or invisible people, individuals who you may see at a location for a period of time and one day notice that they are gone. Much closer to home are those people we know, unlike the homeless, who can also be considered invisible because we don't see their pain. Those who have been laid off, recently unemployed, the single parents who don't alert you that their ends are becoming more difficult to meet, and the elderly who have no concerned family nearby. Can the church do anything to help these people? We can't know until we investigate.

When poverty wears a child's face, when a friend is unemployed, when the children or the elderly or the broken families are real to us-then, by the strange power of God's Spirit, their pain may trigger the necessary energy endurance in us to organize a ministry in response. As one church member discovered, 'it hurts more when you know their names.'⁷⁶

⁷⁴ John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, *Building Communities from Inside Out, a Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing A Community's Assets* (Skokie, IL: ACTA Publications, 1993), 144.

⁷⁵ Ibid.,145.

⁷⁶ Carl S. Dudley, *Community Ministry, New Challenges*, 14.

Driving through the community limits the effectiveness of meeting the people we are looking to help. Drivers tend to take planned routes with the intention of not getting lost, so ideally one must get out of the car and commit to walking in ten block segments.

Coming back together for discussion of the committee member findings should be interesting. Some members who have lived in the community a long time might be surprised to find changes they were not aware of, both good and bad. Others who are new to committee and ministry work may find themselves affected in a way that stirs their passions. Finding the invisible people, the services that the community offers and the interesting people who operate those services should stimulate the desire within the committee members to get to work, if they can agree on which issue to tackle.

When your ministry includes both personal contact and time for reflection, together you can recognize and discuss the intangible forces both within individuals and in societal, in their shared concern for both spiritual inadequacy and social justice that becomes apparent in community ministries.

The use of statistical data can be useful in making the committee aware of certain information which can help determine the area of ministry to approach. For example, if you were thinking of conducting a food pantry, it would be helpful to find out how many people are in the area near your church, their economic status and family size. Then find out how many pantries are operating in the area. Once you have determined the number of pantries then you can find out what items they serve and their days of operation. This information will help the committee decide if the pantry idea is one to commit to. Dudley calls this step *listening to the community*. I agree with Dudley that business or mission established in the community should be with that community's need in mind.

⁷⁷ Carl S. Dudley, *Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry*, 40.

With any plan there must be a discussion of issues or barriers that could affect a good outcome. Many of the church folk I know will tell you that thinking that appears to be negative comes from the Devil, but the reality is that poor planning comes from a lack of preparedness. Have you met with all the stakeholders of the community to discuss if your plan has been tried before and if so, where did it fall short? What new variables should be considered? What problems have budget cuts created or will soon create? Churches feel the economic problems immediately when donations are less each week. Rational discussion of barriers and creative solutions of eliminating those barriers must be addressed to keep community work on track.

After brainstorming, researching the demographics, and physically leaving the church to explore the community and meeting the residents and hearing their concerns, it is time for the group to reflect and consider one or two projects that will be addressed for community outreach. Choose the ministry work that will allow the committee to be the most effective. Prepare a mission statement that is to the point and keeps everyone reminded of the goal. When other church members see that a plan and purpose has been laid out, it could encourage others to join. If the work of the committee can be united to biblical texts it can inform those outside of the committee that the decision to perform service was a spiritual endeavor as well.

If the work of the church has only been internal, ministering to those who have walked through the doors, then history is being made. The use of social media to announce the launching of a new ministry can be effective in gaining support by prayers and encouragement. Assessing the work at periodic intervals, I would suggest quarterly, helps stay on track with the goals the committee established and fix any issues quickly. A

survey of your customers, those you serve, is a great way of measuring your progress. The results of the survey can be shared at the annual church meeting to allow interested congregants an indirect opportunity to be part of community ministry.

Within the congregation's service and ministry to the community is the work of individuals who are searching to find their own niche within the church. Understanding one's individual ministry is essential in the work of ministry to others. There are many people who choose what they consider the more glamorous aspects of ministry such as the choir, or pulpit ministry, placing value on positions rather than understanding that all aspects of ministry have equal value. Once, in delivering a sermon on service at a Deacon's ordination service at a visiting church I questioned if a person didn't like people how could or he/she carry out duties as an usher? I saw several people turn their heads, but paid it no attention. After service while greeting the people I noticed a woman who had an obvious attitude. The pastor came to me later and said that the woman was upset because after my statement the turned heads I observed were looking at her. She was an usher with an attitude. A part of me wanted to apologize to the woman, but at the same time why should I apologize for saying the truth? The woman quit the usher board and later found her niche by creating beautiful programs for the church. This emphasizes the need to recognize where one belongs in ministry and work within their calling, removing the barrier from someone who is more talented in the area, but needs that individual to move so that he/she can be utilized effectively.

CHAPTER 8

A TOUCHY SUBJECT WORTH MENTIONING

The church as a whole is guilty of not effectively dealing with important issues of the day such as AIDS, homosexuality, and domestic violence. Where are the weekly sermons that admonish those who do nothing as their fellow congregants suffer with multiple dilemmas yet say they love Jesus or God whom they have never seen? Where is the justice sermon that addresses the difficult conversations that Katie Day discusses in her book *Difficult Conversations*?

I have never been to a church where women did not outnumber the men. In the majority of churches I have attended, the women carried the load of committee work and the labor and, in essence, sustained the operation of the church whether there was a male or female pastor. In New York State, November is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and draws attention to a topic that gathers little attention. The story of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-20 tells of David's beautiful virgin daughter being raped by her half-brother Amnon, enduring great shame, loss of honor, place in the community and her own father would not defend her honor. The vengeful killing of Amnon by Absalom only added to the dysfunction of David's house. Tamar's voice is not heard again. How many like Tamar suffer in silence unable to worship because of the punishment at the hands of their mate or boyfriend? If women have lost their voices in defending degrading and violent acts against them like Tamar did, who in the church will speak for them? It was difficult to make arguments supporting women as equal when the 'fathers of the faith' stood bold in

their chauvinistic views concerning women and marriage. As Pamela White-Cooper points out in her book *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church's Response*, some of the most widely read theologians offer no rebuttal in support of women, but instead add to disquieting views. White-Cooper points out that Thomas Aquinas believed that a woman is only found in the image of God when she is married to a man because it is only the union of marriage that forms the image of God⁷⁸. She quotes Martin Luther as saying, "Women should remain at home, sit still, keep house and bear and bring up children...if a woman grows weary and at last dies from childbearing, it matters not. Let her die from bearing, she is there to do it."⁷⁹ Luther is also quoted as saying when his wife Katherine got out of line "she gets nothing but a box on the ear."⁸⁰

These opinions no doubt added to the dilemma that women faced then and still face in relationships. If these theologians were able to interpret Scripture to believe that it was acceptable to subjugate women to second class citizenship it only made the water more muddy, because if we look at the stories of Jesus in the gospels and observe his treatment of women, especially those with whom he had issues concerning their ethnicity, he never disrespected them, nor selected subservient roles for them, in fact in Luke 10 when Martha complained about Mary not pitching in to help out serving Jesus told her that Mary had chosen the 'better part'. This showed Jesus gave equality to women and did not look to manipulate or abuse them as was the custom in his day.

How can justice be accomplished concerning this issue, and how is the church responding to this crisis? Do congregants know that if they are sitting on a row with four

⁷⁸ Pamela White-Cooper, *The Cry of Tamar*, 50.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 51.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

women that one of them is a target? One of my co-workers was a worshiper at the church in Clifton, New Jersey in November of 2008, where a man came in to settle a domestic situation with his estranged wife and shot her when she would not leave with him. When a parishioner became involved he was shot and killed. The estranged wife had said she had been a victim of domestic violence. Could the church have prevented this tragic event? Probably not, but was this issue ever spoken of in the church? Was there a plan in place in case this man showed up? The wife had a restraining order against the husband which was supposed to prohibit him from going near the house where she was living with relatives, so he went to the church.

I believe that engaging in difficult conversations from the pulpit and in small groups such as women's and men's groups and teen summits can make participants aware that they are living in a world that is in crisis and victims are not buried under rubble in a remote location, but right down the pew and next to them in the choir stand. Pastors should have regular ministerial staff meetings to address hot button topics and how to discuss them with laity. Clergy should begin to understand when he or she is over matched in certain areas and look to guide the congregant towards a more experienced member of the clergy or to a professional in a specific area such as a domestic violence hotline or even the police. In *No Place for Abuse*, the authors share strategies for placing the church in the middle of being conduits for change surrounding issues of domestic violence. "Congregations and church leaders need to begin a soul-searching process related to violence against women and other forms of family violence."⁸¹

⁸¹ Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark, *No Place for Abuse: Biblical & Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2010), 65.

This kind of thinking and response has to cross denominational and ecumenical lines to bring about change and reform. The authors also spoke about holding batterers accountable for their actions, and I agree. I once participated in a role play that had the wife of one of my deacons come forward with a charge of domestic violence. I gave some answers that were good in my opinion, but inadequate and perhaps uneducated in others. I am sure that this happens in real life and there should be no tolerance for this behavior in the church, with pastors and their staff leading the way.

I was called in by a church to help evaluate a domestic situation where the step-father admitted that he had been having sex with his two step-daughters for a long period of time. I erroneously explained that clergy are mandated reporters in instances of child abuse and that something had to be done for the family as well as the church, which should not sit by and condone or protect a guilty party. The pastors gave the step-father, who was a deacon of the church, until the next morning to turn himself in, which he did. I also recommended counseling outside the church for the teens who had been abused and the mother who was in denial. I later found out that in New York State clergy are not mandated reporters for child abuse, but I would not change my advice, only my facts. The step father went to jail, served his time and the wife wanted him to return home, the same home where the youngest daughter, who was not known to be molested, remained. The mother of the young ladies never took the advice to get counseling for them, so I know that there are still scars that have not healed and issues unresolved.

I believe procedures should be in place in my local church to help those who are in need of healing, the do's and don'ts, and boundary training. Pamela Cooper-White discusses a need for policies surrounding clergy ethics. These policies would include

justice for the victim, reeducation for the clergy and clear consequences which include "accurate public naming of the problem and full investigation of the issue."⁸²

In examining how to effectively practice ministry in the case of domestic violence, it is important that ministerial staff understand what has been articulated in this paper. No one in the church should look at these situations with a skeptical eye and think they don't exist in the church. What happens in "the world" usually is mimicked in the church. Stealing, adultery, homosexuality, and sexual harassment are all things that we are confronted with in the church. The question becomes how we can approach the situations that are difficult to talk about? Just as some are passionate about homelessness and hunger, we must study the trends concerning domestic violence and be prepared to fight the oppression that exists surrounding domestic violence.

If there is a youth ministry within the church, a discussion on teen dating, where many early social patterns are formed, may be an opportunity to discuss domestic violence and begin to shape healthy opinions. There may be a singles ministry where open discussions can be held to broaden opinions concerning domestic violence. There need to be more seminars to address the experiences and help bring about healing, but there must be individuals in attendance equipped to respond to crisis and trauma available for cathartic moments. Teaching and learning to heal is a part of practice I would want to see in a church that I was leading. Many of the issues of violence happened long ago and carrying these issues around is like carrying around an anchor that prohibits freedom of movement.

When Bishop T.D Jakes began his "Woman Thou Art Loosed" series it was revelatory in changing the image of women in the church. The pain that had been bottled

⁸² Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar*, 143.

up for so long in many women had been assigned to death. The church politics that held women back for so long in pulpits in America was weakened to a great extent. Sadly we must realize that some will never come forward or confide in anyone concerning a domestic violence or abuse situation. Some women and men come to church every Sunday with their abuser and continue the charade of a loving relationship wearing the mask of happiness.

Consistency is the key to success to a responsive and transformative practice of ministry. Traci West, professor of ethics and African American studies at Drew University Theological School in New Jersey, believes that a social movement to eliminate the negativity surrounding images of women must be created and responded to with vigilance in order to sustain change. I agree that far too many with influence in the dominant culture are not giving enough support to the efforts to place women in the best possible light.

I also agree with West and her ideas involving what she calls "truth work"⁸³. This idea is built on being a hearer and doer based on the teachings of Jesus. Christ required his followers not just to hear his words but to follow them. West goes on to say, "they can live out this realization of truth by working to create conditions in the world that reflect it. It means doing the work that enables the truth of human wholeness, worth and dignity to be fulfilled⁸⁴." The church has to take on the task of empowering women in the church and outside the church where real ministry exists. Once women are healed in the church the work must be taken back to the families and communities of these same women. My

⁸³ Traci C. West, *Wounds of the Spirit, Black Women, Violence and Resistance Ethics* (New York: New York University Press, 1999). 198.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 199.

church or any other church must look past women only being utilized to prepare and serve chicken dinners or organizing clothing drives and begin to spread the message that the violence against women must cease.

West's community plan for the church concerning domestic violence is to mobilize prayer groups outside of facilities where historically, violence against women has been ignored. For example outside a courthouse where a judge has given a light sentence or freed an abuser, and then the abuser causes more harm to his victim.

The rituals could include prayer vigils outside police stations, courthouses, town halls or state legislature buildings. The group would need to offer specific prayers for judges, prosecutors, legislators, and bureaucratic officials who make daily decisions that affect women's safety.⁸⁵

This out of the box thinking is necessary to shine a light on a previously hidden situation.

Many women suffer from poor or low self-esteem due to societal issues. The church can be instrumental in turning the self-loathing into self-loving. The practice of welcoming people into the house of God is a good place to start. I often encourage the congregation to smile at one another or offer a greeting with the observation that we don't know if there is someone in the home to tell an individual that they are loved. Kroeger and Nason-Clark point out that thirty-five to forty percent of abused women commit suicide. Can the church be a place of love and kindness to those who feel unloved? At times our churches can be too business like and cold with congregants putting up walls to protect themselves from the possibility of taking a risk. We fail to show the love of Christ when we don't take the risk of sharing a smile. The church must counteract the hostility and negativity of the outside world. Creating a safe space in our churches where those who have suffered and have been victimized should be the responsibility of every church.

⁸⁵Traci C. West, *Wounds of the Spirit*. 199-200.

Rereading the story of Tamar caused me to look at women differently than I had previously. I thought I knew the story, but I was not open to empathize with Tamar, only to sympathetically view her as a victim. I now have a clearer view of her loss not only of her virginity but her voice, community standing, and her male family members. If I were to exegete the text more closely I would have to ask where her mother or female figure was and who supported her as a woman in light of this horrific act. The males in Tamar's life acted in a self-serving manner, protecting their honor and standing. Unfortunately because of similar issues, men in the church today tend to respond in like manner.

I would like to begin frank discussions with men, young and old, concerning the treatment of women and begin the process of destroying stereotypical thoughts and misogynist behavior while encouraging a commitment to changing male views of women. This process would also include finding a way to speak to batterers groups and provide spiritual guidance to males who may have forgotten God or be introduced to the one being capable of helping men become more than what they were reduced to by previous failures. To women, I would like to have frank discussions that speak to lifting their self-esteem and encourage them to seek healthy, balanced relationships.

CHAPTER 9

21ST CENTURY LEADERSHIP

Several issues of the Bedford Stuyvesant community have been addressed and depending on who you speak to there are many more that have yet to be discovered. Finding leadership whether in the religious, nonprofit, or government communities that see a need, can mobilize groups for the cause, and get the job done is a daunting task. On the largest platform in this country, President Obama took the challenge of creating health care for all Americans. His goal was to eliminate inadequate healthcare for many while providing sustainable affordable healthcare for all.

Within the plan to insure that all Americans had health benefits was opposition to the plan that could not be foreseen or measured. Members of Congress who have the best healthcare plan in the country fought long and hard to keep the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obama Care) from being presented to the people to the point of shutting down the federal government in hope of making the President renegotiate his policy. Finding a leader with the broad shoulders to carry the load and endure the sleepless nights and second guessing is difficult. Mr. Obama has remained cool under pressure, standing up to his critics, acknowledging the failures of his system and trying to repair the problems in his plan quickly.

What kind of leadership will be necessary to handle the demands of an out of control society where every wart is exposed on social media? Even in the church some

pastors have gained so much notoriety that some congregants may believe they are following rock stars.

There comes a point in all leaders' lives - if they remain in leadership long enough-when they will begin to experience the relational friction, organizational blow-up⁸⁶, and s personal pain that result from unidentified and unresolved inner life issues.

The Bed-Stuy community has been forced into change, naturally due to time and due to shifting demographics as Whites continue to find the neighborhood more attractive because of cheaper rents and greater access to mass transit.

Proprietors such as bodega owners, restaurateurs and any business owner in the community who desires their businesses to thrive and remain lucrative have to consider the shift and have products and services that cater to the needs of the new arrivals. This change also requires the business owners to learn the language of their clientele who could be offended by familiarity. For example the corner store on my street has many of the items that people in this community may want, but as I have observed the clerks speak to some customers in a familiar manner that I find rude, but in speaking to me becomes much more respectful. Once as I was waiting to be served, I noticed a package of condoms placed in front of the Plexiglas counter with a man mounting a woman which I found offensive. I asked the man to remove the box from that location and explained that children should not be exposed to that image. He looked at the box and relocated it to another area. While the owner of the store may not look at himself as a leader of the community he still has responsibility to support those individuals who support him.

The change forces politicians who once had a predominately Black and Hispanic constituency where the issues were dealing with lack of services for minority populations

⁸⁶ Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima, *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership, How to Become an Effective Leader by Confronting Potential Failures* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, Baker Books, 2007), 23.

to direct a more equitable distribution of the pie which occurs with the addition of White and Asian renters and owners. The change will also push pastors of the area to find a language that appeals to a multicultural congregation if they want to see membership grow from within the community. That will require a pastor to move away from the "us and them" social commentary of the 90's and the Giuliani years of being mayor and polarizing the minority communities such as Bed-Stuy, and find consensus language that doesn't omit the struggle of those in the congregation but does keep the gospel message inclusive.

How is a leader defined in the twenty first century? Hopefully not with a style of a dictator who rules with fear or intimidation but a person who invites discussion and encourages healthy debate. Many of our present leaders in government lack character and give way to emotions and retaliation over sound ethical and rational thought. In Bed-Stuy and urban neighborhoods like it leaders must demonstrate a propensity toward social justice and equity.

A leader realizes she cannot solve problems alone and her passion sparks the energy of others. A leader disciplines herself to remain committed and focused over the long haul⁸⁷ even when tempted by personal gain or the inevitable distraction of personal pleasure.

It takes courage to be a leader. The courage to stand up for what one believes is right, the courage to go against what is popular, the courage to stand for those who have no voice and become the spokesperson even at the risk of personal harm. People who qualify as leaders in that way are Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy. These were leaders who took great risk for causes that affected hundreds and thousands of others and for Lincoln, Kennedy and

⁸⁷ John M. Perkins, ed., *Restoring At-Risk Communities, Doing it Together and Doing it Right* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 62.

King paid for that courage and leadership with their lives. The recent death of Mandela in 2013 reminded the world that twenty eight years in jail did not cause compromise in his conviction to see his people free from the oppression of apartheid.

Commitment is another attribute of a leader. The willingness to see a cause through to the end or as far as humanly possible is important for the leader. A cause has many components that may go unnoticed by those not directly involved in it. The Civil Rights movement was more than a black and white issue and King understood that. With his approach to non-violence, King tried to take the energy out of the hatred that existed in America and replace it with love and respect. His refusal to give in to incite the bloodbath that could have ensued due to the cruel treatment of the Blacks, who marched, supported his non-violent strategy and ultimately the Civil Rights Act of 1968. A twenty first century leader has to be unwavering in his/her commitment to resolving issues that impact his/her constituency.

Although King was a minister his activism took him across the lines into the ugly world of politics. He became an adversary of Lyndon Johnson with his position on Vietnam which was a political hot potato. If King were a politician the acrimony would have been acceptable but as a minister there was no room for the bitterness that ensued even if it were one sided on behalf of Johnson. The Nobel Peace Prize that King received in 1964 was indicative of his leadership through one of the ugliest times in America since the Civil War.

In the Bible there are many men who as leaders took risks, had courage and commitment in the name of Jehovah or God. Moses was called to lead Israel out of Egypt and the wilderness and seemed to be ready to finish his task to lead the children into the

Promised Land, only to have his lack of confidence in God's direction and failure to acknowledge God's miracle keep him from going on (Num. 20:1-13).

David was a man after God's heart and had many qualities of a leader, courage, commitment and determination but, his lapses in judgment with Bathsheba and her husband who he sent to his death to cover his infidelity kept him from greater success. David's son Solomon was the wisest man to be found and used that wisdom to build the fortunes of Israel. A leader should be able to ensure that his/her followers are successful also, but like his father, Solomon's indiscretions and failure to protect himself and the people from idol worship cost him.

The story of Nehemiah is the story of a man who felt the needs of his people, the call of God to lead the people, the wisdom to stand in the face of adversity and commitment to see his task to the end. Nehemiah was cup bearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia and had the important job to taste and test the wine served to the king for poison. He had a position of trust and trust worthiness is an important leadership trait. After hearing news that the Jews that had escaped captivity were suffering and the wall of Jerusalem had been broken and the gates destroyed by fire, Nehemiah was grieved and had compassion for the survivors as he prayed for their safety and protection (Nehemiah 1: 1-11).

As Nehemiah was serving the king the king observed that Nehemiah was sad and asked what was wrong. Nehemiah informed him that his homeland was in ruin and that was responsible for his countenance. The king asked how he could help and Nehemiah responded that he wished to return to Judah so that he could help rebuild the city. Once he and the king worked out a timeframe for his return Nehemiah then asked the king for

travel documents and another letter for the keeper of the king's forest to provide the lumber to repair and rebuild the wall and gates of Jerusalem. When these letters were granted him, Nehemiah set out to complete his assignment.

Nehemiah's first task when he arrived in Jerusalem was to do an inspection in secret so he could develop a plan. After the inspection he met with the priests, nobles, the officials and the rest would do the work (2:16-18). Nehemiah told them of his idea to rebuild the walls and the gates and they were anxious to start. A leader must expect opposition from someone in the camp who is looking out for their own self-interest and Nehemiah found them in Sanballat and Tobiah who questioned whether he was rebelling against the king. Nehemiah assured them that God was on his side and they had no right to be involved in Jerusalem's affairs. Nehemiah, the priests, the nobles, the officials and the rest of the men and women set out their plan to restore the wall and the gates. With a systematic and organized effort the various gates were built and the wall was repaired.

A plan was devised by Sanballat and Tobiah to kill the Jews and stop the work, but when Nehemiah heard of the plan he then organized armed guards at different points to ward off any attack and kept the workers motivated and of one mind to finish the job. The work of repairing the wall and rebuilding the gates wore the people down until they complained about each other. Some were complaining that there was not enough to eat because of their large families, others that taxes were so high they could not eat and the third group said they had to sell off their children and mortgage their land to pay their taxes. Nehemiah denounced the nobles and the rulers for profiting off their brethren and informed them that God would not be pleased unless they restored with interest what they had taken. The nobles and rulers agreed to restore with interest all they had taken (5:1-

13). Nehemiah became governor of Judah and for twelve years did not tax the people and initiated reforms that helped bring the people closer to God.

Nehemiah is an example of a leader who was not a king, priest, or prophet but was moved to act on a situation. How did he accomplish the transition from cupbearer to governor?

- ☐ When he heard of Judah's situation Nehemiah prayed for the people, reminded God of his covenant with Moses and Israel, and then waited for God's guidance (1:1-11). A leader does not go without being sent by God.
- ☐ Waiting on God's timing he presented his plan to the king putting aside his position of honor and comfort as cupbearer in the king's palace.
- ☐ Nehemiah overcame his fear and took a risk approaching the king with a sad countenance which could have cost him his life. Nehemiah was also aware that some time earlier that there had been a previous attempt to rebuild the wall at Jerusalem and it was stopped because the idea was raised that the king of Persia would lose control of the territory if the wall were rebuilt, so a decree was issued that the wall could not be rebuilt without a new decree from the king (Ezra 4:21).
- ☐ Nehemiah approached the king with praise and then spoke of his ancestors knowing that the kings of Persia had a tradition of worshipping their ancestors, touching the heart of the king (2:3).
- ☐ When the king asked how he could help, Nehemiah had a plan prepared for passage and supplies. A leader does not wait for others to figure it out (2:8).
- ☐ Arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah surveyed firsthand what was needed to complete the task. When he met with the people, told them of the favor he

received from God to receive favor from the king, and laid out his plan using inclusive language to show how as a unified body they could rebuild the wall, and the people agreed. A leader must be able to build consensus with groups to be effective.(2:17-18)

- Nehemiah's plan had contingencies for distractions from the opposition and remained organized through adversity. A leader works to keep distractions at a minimum, does not panic, and keeps the group focused throughout the task (4:13-23).

Nehemiah demonstrated courage, commitment, passion, compassion, love, wisdom and attention to detail in his leadership of the people to help build the gates and repair the wall in Jerusalem. Not every leader has the capacity of Nehemiah which explains the Hitler's and the Jim Jones' of this world. Not every leader will be the leader of a nation such as President Obama, but leadership on a smaller scale is equally important and necessary to take neighborhoods like Bed-Stuy and other urban areas and keep them vital and growing.

Urban neighborhoods need vested neighbor-leaders who will organize the taking of playgrounds back from the drug dealers. Educated neighbors are needed to revive the PTA and turn the schools back into environments of creative learning. Urban renewal, public safety, and public education initiatives funded and operated from outside the community may have their place, but without the leadership of committed, connected, compassionate neighbors who have a stake in the future of the neighborhood, these programs will have little lasting effect.⁸⁸

Block associations are effective in keeping order and respect for the block and surrounding streets. For the past thirty years I have watched and assisted Ms. Catherine Arline, the Quincy Street Block Association President, work to make the block clean and safe for all the residents. Ms. Arline helped develop a pocket park on a vacant corner lot,

⁸⁸ John Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 81-82.

works with the Parks Department to obtain clean up initiatives that they provide, works with the local precinct to address concerns of crime and quality of life issues, and is a wealth of knowledge in the area of community resources. Ms. Arline is an example of indigenous leadership. Indigenous leadership is borne out of a resident investing their time and energy in the neighborhood where they have committed to living in, possibly raising a family in, or having their business in.

I interviewed Ms. Arline to hear the views of someone who has invested time and labor into making this community better:

How long have you lived in Bed-Stuy?

Sixty two years. I came here as a teenager from North Carolina for a couple of summers, and after I graduated college I moved here.

How long have you lived on Quincy Street?

I have lived on this block for fifty two years and have owned my home for forty two years.

What college did you attend and what was your major?

I attended St. Augustine College in Raleigh, North Carolina and graduated with a sociology degree and later went to Howard University where I received a Master of Social Work degree.

Why did you choose social work?

The town I grew up in was a very tight knit community and I always saw people helping each other. I saw my mother take food to other families who didn't have enough and my mother always instilled in us to help others. When I worked during the summers I would give my earnings to my mother who would help my older sister through college. My

older sister helped me through college and when I graduated I helped my sister through college, and that's how we made it.

Have you always worked in the community?

When I lived here during parts of the summer, the woman I stayed with took me and some other girls to meetings that she went to. I just began to become a part of what was going on. I worked with the Model Cities Housing Development Program in the sixties which was designed to bring affordable housing into the neighborhoods. I worked with street gangs in Bed-Stuy to try to stop violence. I am most proud of my work with Community Sponsors Young Mothers, helping pregnant teenage mothers finish their high school education and we were instrumental in opening the first infant day care program in the country here in Bed-Stuy.

How long have you been president of the Quincy Street Block Association and what other affiliations do you have?

I have been part of the block Association for about sixty years, president for twenty three, I am on the 81st Precinct Community Council, the advisory board of the Alcoholism Treatment Center, a member of Community Board 3, member of the NYPD Clergy Task Force, founding board member of Neighborhood Housing Services.

Ms. Arline's contributions to Bed-Stuy are excellent examples of how becoming involved in one's own community can be rewarding to those receiving services, and to the one who unselfishly gives to the community with a willing heart.

"There is a growing consensus that those in the environment understand it best and are best equipped to prioritize and design solutions. The prevailing wisdom is that

outsiders should never impose their views or programs on a community."⁸⁹ While outsiders may bring in good ideas, if they have no vested interest in the community and fail they could pull up stakes and leave unlike the achieving neighbor-leader who would be likely to launch a new plan. Many of the proprietors of the businesses in Bed-Stuy live in other communities and their tax dollars, families and loyalties are elsewhere. It would be great to see more businesses owned and operated by people looking to live and grow in this community. With the viewpoint that leaders are not born but made utilizing the example of Nehemiah how can a neighborhood insure its leadership?

When Israel chose Saul as its leader, the Bible informs us that his appearance was a factor in his selection.

There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish son of Abiel son of Zeror son of Becorah son of Aphiah a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. He had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; he stood head and shoulders above everyone else (1 Samuel 9:1-2).

Although appearance still plays a role in how some choose their leadership. It was reported that in a Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960 that although Nixon was a much more seasoned politician and was concluding his second term as vice-president, his appearance on television was a negative experience that created a general distrust from the American people. "Reacting to the vice-president's on air appearance, Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley reportedly said, 'My God, they've embalmed him before he died.' The following day, the *Chicago Daily News* ran the headline 'Was Nixon Sabotaged by TV Makeup Artists?'"⁹⁰

⁸⁹ John Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 82.

⁹⁰ The Kennedy-Nixon-debates, The History Channel, <http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/kennedy-nixon-debates>. (accessed February 15, 2014).

Choosing a leader based on appearance based on looks or speech that lacks substance should not define anyone's choice although it is evident that it can. Leaders cannot be successful without the help and support of others. The indigenous leader is no exception to this rule. The indigenous leader or achieving neighbor-leader may not be refined and smooth, but may have the fire, passion and insight concerning an issue that is necessary to bring attention and change to the matter.

We must see the people around us as leaders, people who have insights and intuitions that are far more sensitive to the needs of the community than ours. Often in our communities the leaders may not be the most articulate or the most polished but have an innate ability to guide and lead, therefore our first commitment must be a strong belief that there are leaders just waiting to be developed.⁹¹

There should be no shame in not possessing a solution for a problem, just as there should not be a problem supporting someone who does.

For those who may shun the limelight that leadership may possibly bring it is important to empower a leader in that role. During the Civil Rights era there were many willing workers to support the need for change that existed in America, but who would be the face of the movement? King was chosen to become the face or leader of the Montgomery Alabama Bus Boycott in 1955 although he had been in Montgomery for less than a year. Making a commitment to empower the leader is critical to the success of the individual who understands without those commitments of time, money and emotional support a positive result is futile. "As we grow a new generation of leadership we must be committed to give them responsibilities in areas in which they can lead. Often this means that we must take a back seat and allow others to step into the foreground and lead."⁹²

⁹¹ John Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 183.

⁹² Ibid.

Jesus picked his disciples from a group of men that would seem unlikely to be chosen to change the world. He chose fishermen, a tax collector, a political zealot and some whose resumes remain a mystery. He gave the disciples on the job training, told them that taking the responsibilities as followers would cause people to hate them (Matt. 10:22) and that one day he would leave them physically and they would have to lead independent of his presence (Jn 14:2-4). Jesus mentored, nurtured and empowered his disciples telling them that they would do greater works than he did (Jn 14:12). The only way for leaders to develop is through observation and opportunity. The disciples observed Jesus deal with difficult people and perform miracles as they followed him during his earthly ministry. He constantly spoke with them, gave them examples that they could identify with and prepared the disciples for a future without him. There were times they went ahead of him giving them an opportunity to operate on their own and ultimately began the first church found in the book of Acts.

Change is an important component of twenty first century leadership. The word change and the idea of change can make many hearts weak and can cause major panic for those looking to keep the status quo. Most political campaigns are centered on the idea that change is needed to make things better. Barrack Obama's first campaign slogan was "change we can believe in" and to counter that idea the Tea Party wanted to change things back to the good old days. But change for the sake of change rarely works and radical change can be disastrous. The average person avoids change and people who are constantly changing things in their lives are viewed as adventurous or unstable. How can a leader recognize the need to change and shake things up or be cautious and wait, and

how can church leaders change with the times to be better community partners and avoid the possibility of losing the moral compass?

While working in the human service field I have observed many managers who operate on the "do as I say, not as I do" style of leadership. That type of leadership leads to dissention and ineffectiveness from workers. Leaders should set the tone for how an operation is run, how people should be treated, gain the trust of the people and never exploit that trust. Effective leaders have eyes everywhere making sure that the leaders under them are modeling behavior that will allow all workers to feel that their accomplishments have value. Effective leaders are also able to learn as well as instruct creating an atmosphere where the members of a work group are unafraid to make a suggestion. "Today's leaders are always in relationship with each other, never complete in themselves. They are part of a team but also the leader of the team. At times they act within the team and other times they give direction to the team. They are a team member and a team leader."⁹³

Some people who have risen within the ranks of an organization forget how they got there. The hard work tempered with empathy for their co-workers made them candidates for promotion but once up the ladder they may want to change the rules that allowed them to climb up. The reason why the reality television show *Undercover Boss* is popular is because people like the idea that the boss wants to know personally how things are going. In disguise, the undercover boss, can observe without employees putting on a show to impress, and get a true response to see if the company is treating the workers well and also find out if there are any slackers in the operation.

⁹³ William M. Easum, *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers: Ministry Anytime Anywhere by Anyone* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 72.

Easum describes what he calls permission leaders as leaders that function by

permission giving rather than control or managing. They are both individualistic and collaborative. They network individuals and teams through a shared vision of a preferred future. They do not give orders or dictate how people must operate within the organization. They cast vision that creates victory that frees people to make on the spot decisions, and then get out of the way!⁹⁴

Easum describes an ideal environment to work in which requires every member to commit to success, which is rare. I believe that there should be teaching at every level to maintain continuity. Permission leaders would be the broadest minded leaders allowing all workers to develop and potentially lead in their areas of strength.

Change of mindset and antiquated policies are needed by twenty first century leadership to progress in society. Micromanaging all facets of the operation will take life away from a leader where delegating and trust allow for all to enjoy the experience. My experience with pastors from the sixties and seventies revealed a sense of insecurity that would not allow them to train younger ministers for fear that the members might like them better. Those pastors would rarely take vacations and probably shortened their lifespan. That God sent individuals into the church who had gifts and talents which would help the church grow and flourish, and yet they could not find a place in the ministry to work, was disturbing to me. "Permission giving churches have leaders who are secure enough to equip others for ministry and then get out of their way and let them develop their ministry even if it is something in which they might not participate."⁹⁵ The leader would also be wise to check in with the one developing the ministry to show support and encouragement.

⁹⁴ William M. Easum, *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers*, 72.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 54.

Within the liberty to develop within the permission giving church there must be boundaries and a structure for a final decision to be made when there is conflict. This is where the leader may not look to dictate but become the voice of wisdom guiding and directing matters to an effective conclusion. Although some may be accustomed to have every decision planned for them, leaders who support this weakness defeat the need to empower disciples as Jesus did. Some churches have been governed by rules and regulations that no longer work, have rapidly declining numbers and no clue to why membership has declined. Leadership in that position may have to struggle with the various boards within the church to implement change but using wisdom and consensus building strategy, change can be accomplished over time.

To build consensus strategies and not lose the ethical high ground church leaders must commit their ways to God for guidance. I believe that all leaders should be ethically sound in order to be respected. Too often we see leaders fail because they lose their ability to resist greed and power. Human beings are not perfect but there is a reasonable expectation for a leader to be mature and not be brought down by base desires. "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded" (Luke 12:48). Since leaders are made, the twenty first century leader must allow him/herself to be pliable but not gullible, wise and not wimpy, strong but not rigid, balanced never too much to the right or the left and always seeking to walk in purpose. These same leaders who are active in the Bed-Stuy community in any capacity, religious, human service, local business or politics must work to help the residents of Bed-Stuy achieve health and wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

Many stakeholders live in Bedford-Stuyvesant; young, old, rich, poor, black, white, brown, healthy, sick, homeless, those who live in Brownstones and those who care about others as well as those who don't. This is still an at-risk community. Children are at risk of being insufficiently educated, exposed to drugs and alcohol at an early age. Single mothers are at risk of not having enough food for their children to eat, or since they may have to work two jobs to make ends meet, not be at home long enough to give better than adequate care. The homeless, the elderly, the mentally ill and the developmentally disabled are at risk of continuing to be the "invisible people" that people tend to ignore and city and local services rarely provide enough for.

Some homeowners are still at risk of losing their homes due to the highest rate of foreclosures are found in Brooklyn.⁹⁶ Others in Bed-Stuy are at risk of gentrification, a process that economically undermines longtime residents as housing becomes unaffordable causing residents to be priced out of the housing market. Comments made by United States Representative Hakeem Jefferies enlightened listeners in a speech at a local high school in January 2014. "Jefferies who represents Central and Eastern Brooklyn pointed to a lack of affordable housing in the 8th Congressional District, calling

⁹⁶ NY1.com, "Citywide Foreclosure Rates Highest In Brooklyn, Study Finds" <http://www.ny1.com/content/news/135780/citywide-foreclosure-rates-highest-in-brooklyn--study-finds> (accessed February 17, 2014).

gentrification "a malignant tumor." "Once it takes hold of a neighborhood, it completely devours it, and then it goes on to consume neighborhood after neighborhood."⁹⁷

Every resident of Bed-Stuy is at risk of being shot by a bullet fired from an illegal handgun and every effort must be made by all municipal agencies and local church efforts such as the gun buyback program to stop the violence. Mayor Bloomberg commented on a senseless shooting in Bed-Stuy. "You have a right to live in Bed-Stuy and not have bullets whiz past your head" he told reporters. "That is a civil right...I just told him we have to do everything we can to protect those rights. I promised the father I would not flag in my desire to get guns out of the hands of minors and people with criminal records." Tayloni was shot outside her home by a teen aiming for a rival gang member. Kane Cooper 17, laughed when told the bullet he fired hit the girl prosecutors said."⁹⁸

Bed-Stuy is at risk of losing more lives, young and old, male and female of all ethnic groups due to the crimes associated with the sale of illegal drugs in this community. The war on drugs has not been effective due to the endless supply of product on the streets and the endless supply of customers who are addicted and seem powerless to end their addiction. An arrest in February of 2013 is not enough to hope for the eradication of drugs in this community. "An indictment was unsealed today is Brooklyn Federal Court charging six defendants from the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York with trafficking crack and powder cocaine. A one year investigation by the

⁹⁷ Paul DeBenedetto, "Gentrification: A Malignant Tumor in Poor Communities, Congressman Says", www.dnainfo.com/new-york/2014/01/31/bed-stuy/gentrification-malignant-tumor-poor-communities-congressmansays. (accessed February 17, 2014).

⁹⁸ Chelsia Rose Marcus, Jennifer Fermino and Barry Paddock, "11-Year-old Brooklyn Girl Feared Paralyzed by Stray Bullet Moves Arms in Sign of Hope" <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/mayor-bloomberg-vow-dad-11-year-old-girl-paralyzed-stray-bullet-stop-gun-violence-article-1.1361851> (accessed February 17, 2014).

FBI and the NYPD resulted in the charges."⁹⁹ The indictment also netted a cache of illegal hand guns which is to be expected in drug cases.

Who is up to the task of taking back the streets, helping those who are in need and ensuring the future of a neighborhood that has taken giant steps since the sixties and seventies when banks redlined Bed-Stuy and would not give loans to fix houses in this neighborhood.

In those days urban renewal meant urban destruction and displacement, and people all over the neighborhood were determined to hold onto Bedford-Stuyvesant's magnificent housing stock. Yet young people and families were leaving in alarming numbers, shaken by relentless negative publicity about the neighborhood; poor and unresponsive public services and the banking institutions policy of redlining.¹⁰⁰

Who can see the beauty of this neighborhood and want to make it better without the ulterior motive of flipping houses and take the money elsewhere?

The church, community organizations and human service agencies have to come to the table to have the discussion concerning where they can help one another. Each of their services involves the active people of this community as well as the invisible people that are the neediest and require immediate help. The welfare of the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn is at risk no matter how rosy the outlook may be with trendy cafés and condos that appeal to the six figure income crowd. The dozens of food pantries with lines stretching half the block says that more than a few people are hungry. The sixty or more individuals that I observed at the Antioch Baptist Church which hosted Operation Safe Surrender indicated there are people in need that will respond if help is offered.

⁹⁹ "Bedford-Stuyvesant Based Drug Ring Charged with Narcotics Trafficking", United States Attorney's Office, www.justice.gov/usao/nye/pr/2013/2013feb21b.html (accessed February 17, 2014).

¹⁰⁰ Brownstones of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Inc., www.brownstonersofbedstuy.org (accessed February 17, 2014).

My efforts to get the churches organizations and agencies together did not work as I had planned and hoped for, but that does not mean that the need is not there. Recently while waiting for a red light I noticed a church that had a poster out front announcing a domestic violence conference held a couple of months ago. I was excited even though I had missed the event a church was dealing with an important issue that has received very little conversation in churches that I am associated with. I am going to make contact with someone from the church to inquire about the event and make an attempt be a part of any future conferences.

With the information I have gathered through this project, Consistent Life Ministries will begin to partner with a couple of agencies that are doing community work and can utilize extra hands. I am also planning to sponsor the church/community exchange event at a later date when the weather will be better along with my planning to bring all sides together.

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**Enhancing the Partnership: Enlarging the Relationship between the Local Church
and Community through Biblical Engagement**

By

Donald L. Odom

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary

February 20, 2013

Challenge Statement

In many communities the local church is not a partner with social service or mental health facilities. An informational void needs to be filled. Exploring local demographics and assessing congregational needs, recognizing and utilizing community resources, a resource aid will be created to assist with needs that the local church is unable to provide. The goals of this project are to assist local churches in creating a resource referral source while creating dialogue between church and community and establish partnerships.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

The setting for the project is Consistent Life Ministries, 956 Putnam Ave in Brooklyn New York. The church is located in the Bedford-Stuyvesant (Bed-Stuy) section, which is a diverse neighborhood of largely Black and Hispanic, and an influx of white residents since the early 2000s. Bed-Stuy is a part of Brooklyn Community Boards 3, 8, and 16, and its borders are Flushing Avenue to the North, Classon Avenue to the west; Broadway and Saratoga to the east and Atlantic Avenue to the south. The Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation would argue that Bed-Stuy's borders are larger and include "the area from Atlantic Avenue south to Eastern Parkway, which is designated Crown Heights for the purpose of city planning."¹ The 81st and 79th precincts of the NYPD patrol the area. It is served by numerous bus lines of the MTA, as well as the A, C, G and J subway lines.

Bedford-Stuyvesant was once called "the largest ghetto in the country"² and then asked about in this manner, "why would anyone want to live there?"³ While the neighborhood no longer can be associated with abject poverty, there are issues that still

¹ Matias Echanove, *On the Move: Demographic Trends & Economic Development in the heart of Brooklyn*. Master Thesis, Urban Planning Program, Columbia University 2003.

² Barry Stein, *Rebuilding Bedford-Stuyvesant, Community Economic Development in the Ghetto*, Center for Community Development, Cambridge Massachusetts. 1975.

³ Mary H. Monomi, *Bedford Stuyvesant the Anatomy of a Central City Community, Quadrangle*. New York: The New York Times Book Co. 1973 p.1

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exist around economics. Almost half of the households live with less than 25,000 a year, and 35.2% of households have an annual income of less than 10,000^{4 5}

A brief history of the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood: The village of Bedford was established by the Dutch West India Company in 1663. The name Stuyvesant was added later to include the area of Stuyvesant Heights was first established as farmland. Dutch farmers began to sell land to buyers in the Nineteenth century. In 1838 free blacks were among the first to settle in the area. James Weeks, one of those individuals was an entrepreneur who purchased land and sold it later to other blacks. Weeksville, a smaller community within Bed-Stuy was named after Weeks. The building of Brownstone row houses built in the surrounding area during the housing boon had upper middle and middle class residents mostly of Dutch and German decent occupying other parts of the Bedford community. But after the Great Depression those groups moved out and ethnic groups such as Jews, Italians, West Indians, and the Irish began to move in, creating a more diverse community, but a community on the decline in light of what was happening to decreasing property values.⁶ This diverse community drew in more working class individuals who were able to purchase properties that were being sold at a premium mostly due to not being able to afford taxes.

Blacks bought the houses formerly owned by the previous immigrant group and Bedford was further devalued. As blacks migrated from the South and went to Harlem,

⁴ Moon Wha Lee, *Housing New York City 1999*, Department of Housing Preservation & Development, New York, 2002.

⁶ Douglas C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press. 1990. P. vii.

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with the creation of the A train line, many blacks left Harlem in the mid 1930s, many moved into the Bed-Stuy area, creating a second cultural hub. This also meant that the area's diversity was on the decline as the numbers of blacks moved in. "The population of Bedford-Stuyvesant went from 25% black in 1940 to 50% in 1950, 74% in 1960 to 82% in 1970."⁷ "The unavailability of capital in the neighborhood prevented investment and thus the creation of more blight. It constituted an absolute constraint on growth."⁸ This growing ethnic composition which included blacks who had immigrated from Caribbean islands, created a fertile ground for racism, redlining, a process used by banks to deny mortgages and other loans to those in a certain area which created further property decay, and the unrest of a frustrated community.

Civil Rights legislation and the development of corporations such as the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, which was developed as the country's first Community Development Corporation (CDC) with the assistance of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, assisted the community in receiving federal funding and influencing prominent members of the business and political arena to be on its board of directors.⁹ This effort did not resolve all the neighborhoods ills, drugs, gang violence, apathy by police, but was a beginning in addressing a need for change. The Restoration Corporation was largely instrumental in creating a surge in renovation projects and introducing mortgage programs to the neighborhood over a thirty year plus period. "It has renovated 4,200

⁷ Barry Stein, *Rebuilding Bedford Stuyvesant, Community Economic Development in the Ghetto*. 1975. P.2.

⁸ Richard G. Lipsey, K. Alec Chrystal, *An Introduction to Positive Economics*. 8th ed. Oxford University Press. 1995.

⁹ Arthur Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times*. New York: Mariner Books. 1978. p.786

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homes covering 150 blocks and provided more than 250 million in home mortgages and rehabilitation loans to neighborhood homeowners.”¹⁰

The neighborhood has enjoyed resurgence in the years since 2000. The availability of brownstone homes and questionable reported lower crime rate statistics has made Bedford-Stuyvesant more attractive along with new restaurants and other small business opportunities. The fear of displacement still looms for some homeowners and renters who could be priced out of the neighborhood. There are other notable changes as well with an increase of nearly 25% of household incomes over 50,000 compared to one in eight in 1990, real estate values have doubled or tripled in some cases, and the infant mortality rate decreased from 21 per thousand in 1990 to 9.¹¹ There are other social ills that need to be addressed such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has affected the borough of Brooklyn. “Central Brooklyn, specifically Bed-Stuy and Crown Heights, is considered the epicenter for HIV/AIDS epidemic in Brooklyn.”¹² There is so much to be done in the areas of HIV/AIDS, homelessness, hunger and mental health and crime that the churches and religious community can do to fulfill the mission of Christ and assist those in need.

There are soup kitchens, free food programs in the Bedford Stuyvesant community along with a growing number of half-way houses for those newly released from prison and those who are mentally challenged. Noting that there are programs in existence, the economic crisis that affects America affects the bottom line greater in the

¹⁰ Carol Steinbach, *Community Development Corporations in US Civil Society*. 1987.

¹¹ Real Estate Solutions, LLC, *Economic, Demographic and Real Estate Development Trends*, Brooklyn. 2000.

¹² Danielle Douglass, Our Times Press, *Targeting AIDS in Central Brooklyn*. Edition 165: 21 April 2005.

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inner city where median incomes are less. “Although the context has changed the need for a wide variety of community ministries has increased; at the same time our national resources for responding to crises have diminished.”¹³ Local churches have to be community responsive to help where the government can no longer help, and recognize the unrecognizable outside the church doors. “To be in mission is to be sent out. To carry out God’s mission one must move beyond one’s own self, one’s own world, to enter into participatory relationships with others and with God.”¹⁴

¹³ Carl S. Dudley. *Faith-Based Community Ministries in a 9/11 World*. www.pbs.org/thecongregation/indepth/community_ministries.html 3/28/2012

¹⁴ Dale T. Irvin and Akintunde E. Akinade, *The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 174.

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CHAPTER 2

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE

“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you in exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” (Jer. 29:7) The text in Jeremiah 29 clearly establishes that the people of God are to be a part of their surroundings and not live in isolation, praying for the community and in doing so their needs will be met. The local church sits in its community by choice or necessity, but either way there is a responsibility for that local church to be in dialogue with its neighbors. Once the doors are open people who have various needs may enter those doors seeking relief from the issues of life or looking for sanctuary. This is why the creation of the referral resource is a necessary tool that will push the pastor out of the pulpit into the community to seek out additional assistance unavailable in the local church.

In urban areas of many cities issues exist that can compromise the quality of life for its citizens. Crime, drugs, homelessness, hunger, single-parent households, poverty and lack of healthcare are just some of the issues that individuals face on a daily basis. People carry these same issues into the church and the church for all the discussion of Christ and the cross, to be effective agents for change these issues must be addressed. For those who question why the church should be interested in putting time and resources into helping those in need. Jesus offers clarity to some of these issues in Matthew 25: 42-43. “For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” Clearly these are reactions of the insensitive to those who lived on the margins and Jesus’ message was and is that if those

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who abide on the margin aren't being helped then ministry is not effectively being practiced.

As noted previously the church members are a reflection of the community in most cases, the exception is the commuter church, where many of its members worship there but live elsewhere. Human beings have problems or issues no matter their social location, so it is incumbent upon the church to have a plan to address the problems whether they can be handled in house or assistance is needed from an outside entity such as a community organization. There are certain issues that the church have not addressed effectively or compassionately especially in the black church such as homosexuality and domestic violence. On homosexuality, "many black church people have unabashedly proclaimed that "they" (that is homosexuals) have no business engaging in the sinful behaviors that leads to AIDS. Some black preachers have admonished their congregations that homosexuality is a sin and though we are to love the sinner, we must hate the sin. Others have called homosexuality nothing less than an "abomination."¹⁵ Let's explore a viewpoint concerning domestic violence offered by Dr. Traci West. "Biblical and church teachings that reinforce submission to men as proper authority figures in the home can also support the idea that God sanctions the abuse of women."¹⁶ Traditional church taboo subjects just mentioned as well as cultural norms that deter or embarrass congregants from seeking help such as assistance for mental illness must be addressed and in some cases debunked before healing can begin.

¹⁵ Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: a Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999), 3.

¹⁶ Traci C. West, *wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence and Resistance Ethics*. New York: New York University Press. 1999. P 61-62.

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The church cannot be a standalone entity in the community while people in the pews perish lacking the knowledge that help is nearby. Noted liberation theologian James Cone, in his book, *For My People*, challenged black Christians to take a greater responsibility to stand up against the injustices they face and not accept the living to go to heaven philosophy that many blacks adopted to avoid controversial issues of race, politics, poverty and injustice. Evangelical Christians or the Moral Majority cannot be the only voice of the church, especially when that voice is not raised over issues that affect the inner cities or urban churches and people of color. There is work that needs to be done in these areas as well to bridge the denominational divide.

The pastor, for all of his/her knowledge and the church for the programs that are developed within its walls to provide ministry, is not capable of answering all questions or able to provide the long term support that the community organization was established to do. Mental health and substance abuse issues take considerable time for many to overcome and as supportive the pastor may be in dealing with a parishioner or congregant, a linkage with an agency equipped to deal with such matters helps all parties achieve a more significant result. Failure to address these issues hurts the community due to the lack of empowerment of those with issues; it also robs the church of the opportunity to be a conduit for change. The church in Acts was involved with taking care of widows and orphans and dealing with the oppressive Roman government. There are similar issues that the church in America should be a part of. Poverty still exists, domestic violence and violence against women in particular is an issue that needs active participation from the pulpit, and in joint efforts with the justice system and community based operations.

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Creating this resource will allow congregants to meet their neighbors, get them more involved with the issues that matter in the community and impact lives when utilized. At this point the available resources are the site member's willingness to participate in the walk around process as well as asking their congregations to participate with surveys. The investment or buy in by the target group is the new information that will be gathered and compiled for use. The only foreseeable conflict of interest within the site team is when you choose busy people their time is limited, but for the gifts that they possess they are invaluable to the project.

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CHAPTER 3

PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Identify assumptions behind what people say concerning the biblical mandate, “Love thy neighbor” (Matthew 22:39). Explore reasons why some people exist in the conditions they are in.

Strategy 1: Invite interested communities to read texts alongside church members giving them mutual weight in interpreting the text.

Strategy 2: Explore and examine commentaries that comment on key Bible passages through the eyes of those who may feel disinherited.

Strategy 3: Review pre and post surveys to explore the changes experienced during the process.

Expected Response

There is hope that a new and greater understanding of the text for all participants that will enlarge and enlighten the community.

Goal 2: Identify agencies, institutions, etc congregations currently partnered with and discover new agencies that can assist in offering services to the community especially the disenfranchised and marginalized.

Strategy 1: Evaluate the strength and character of that partnership.

Strategy 2: Explore commitment to leverage each one’s strength.

Strategy 3: Begin preparation for the meet and greet event with introductory correspondence to agencies and churches.

Expected Response

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A Critical examination of the agencies, organizations and institutions is necessary in order to continue previously effective working relationships, while promoting the initiative of locating additional partnerships.

Goal 3: Giving “voice” to the powerless by inclusion in defining and resolving their needs.

Strategy 1: Survey congregants to assess most important areas of need.

Strategy 2: Examine what power the various participants-churches, community agencies and the target audience has to resolve their plight.

Strategy 3: Create a user-friendly and exhaustive list of resources that will provide necessary information to those in need.

Expected response

Adding resources for those who are in need while establishing the local church as an interested partner whose goal is more than operating solely as a religious entity, but also as a linchpin in the community.

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CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Practical Methodology

How might we identify resources within our community to meet our community needs?

A walking tour of community to identify agencies and organizations that offers services to neighborhood residents. The resources have been deemed necessary by the demographic research in the Introduction to the Setting chapter. Poverty, homelessness, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence and substance abuse, are some of the issues that have to be addressed to improve community life. We will conduct an inquiry of the agencies which will be achieved by face to face meetings with representatives from the agencies to determine pertinent information.

Biblical/Theological

How do understandings of biblical texts encourage and or inhibit a Christian faith community's involvement with the world?

When Jesus spoke of loving thy neighbor as thy self, (Matt. 22:39) there was a responsibility placed on his followers in that day as well as those to come. If there is no understanding of the Imago Dei and a need to realize koinoina or community from giving and sharing, then the mandate to love one another is lost. Many Christians have a narrow scope of with they will share God's love, or misinterpretation of Scripture that would allow for the exclusion of some because of differences. Exploration of some of the biblical texts that are quoted often, but that are not always demonstrated in actions should create dialogue that will generate change. This exchange done in a Bible study discussion with church members and those who may not be active in the church will examine past

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meanings and present understandings of select verses through commentaries and life experiences.

Social

How can we build new and strengthen existing partnerships between the church and community on the way to better assist the disenfranchised and disinherited?

In the book of Acts the apostles appointed deacons to deal with issues of the community (6:1-3). Current issues in society dictate the resumption of the church to be an integral part of community life. Whether community residents are attending worship services in the local church or pass through after service times due to programs that assist them with resources, the church has to increase its partnership with local organizations that offer services which the church is not equipped to handle. How to build these relationships and create streams of information that will empower and transform the disenfranchised and disinherited is the goal of this project.

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CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION PROCESS

Method of evaluation 1

In April 2013, (strategy 1:1) a month long Bible study will be held with interested parties and church members to study their views concerning love and how it impacts their lives. Bible study participants will complete a preliminary survey concerning their view on Scripture in Matthew 22:39, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" prior to the beginning of the study. Data will be kept and compared with a post survey to be completed after the study to see if what if any views have changed towards the concept of love and how it is administered. A twenty percent increase in clearer understanding of the selected text will indicate that the goal has been achieved. The candidate will also conduct interviews with clergy to ascertain their views of the Matthew text and inclusion.

Method of evaluation 2

As a result of the information day linkages will be developed that will assist the interested parties to better serve the community. A database will be created along with a user-friendly reference for the churches. This event will create an awareness of agencies and organizations that exist to help the community's underserved and disenfranchised populations, while informing the churches that allies exist to further the mission of reconciliation of those who sit on the margins.

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CHAPTER 6

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

The Process

The members of my Site Team reviewed the ministerial competencies and by way of discussion with me, evaluated the areas for growth for the project. A collaboration of the Site Team's and my assessment produced the following ministerial competencies to continue to practice or develop.

Religious Educator

The candidate with an opportunity to engage with interested parties in dialogue concerning the Scriptures will look to erase misconceptions harbored through the years and create a new consciousness. By being an open communicator and skilled in assessing the needs of others, the candidate will work towards helping the interested parties look inward to discern new meanings for previously read texts. Reading with different lenses with the goal of healing from past hurts and promote reconciliation is paramount to the success of this competency. This competency is keeping in line with goal 1.

Prophetic Agent

Candidate through his understanding of social injustices will look to champion change in the community and bring awareness to the plight of those who suffer and have no voice. Candidate also seeks to galvanize other community organizations and church leaders for the purpose of realizing social change. This competency is keeping in line with goal 2.

Ecumenist

Candidate understands the need to minister efficiently in an inclusive environment and the need to develop an interfaith dialogue in order to reach as many as possible, some

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who may exist outside his faith tradition. Candidate desires to expand his knowledge of those in the community in other faith traditions whose practices advance the peace and well-being of the neighborhood. This competency is keeping in line with goal 3.

Key to the Meaning of Qualifying Words

Continue This is a competency that this person already excels in or rates highly satisfactory in performance.

Develop This is a competency that this person shows strength in, but needs to hone and smooth in order to develop further or excel.

Attention This points to an area where special attention is needed, especially in light of a particular ministry in which the person is engaged. It may be that the person was never provided an opportunity to develop competency, but it could also be that a personal characteristic (mood, temperament, commitment, or problem) interferes with the development and execution of the competency.

Start This designates a competency for which a gift has been uncovered but is not being used, and is an area to develop because the talent is latent.

Skip This is a competency that this person for some reason should leave alone. Be sure to indicate why she or he should leave it alone.

No Basis If there is no basis for assessment for this candidate, say so.

1. Theologian

A theologian engages actively in biblical study and theological reflection in the context of the contemporary world, in an effort to continue to grow and become more effective in

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interpreting the word in a particular time and place. To this end the Candidate demonstrates

- * training in biblical or scriptural studies (formal or informal)
- * continued and consistent study of scriptures
- * working knowledge of other disciplines, e.g. psychology, sociology, or economics.
- * study of a variety of theologians/exegetes to gain a diversity of perspectives.
- * ability to relate the word to the world and the world to the word locally and globally
- * understanding of the doctrines of the church/synagogue/mosque/community of faith
- * understanding of the historical development of the community of faith
- * ability to reflect theologically upon experiences and life styles
- * ability to recognize ethical implications of particular problems and to move to an
- * ethically justifiable posture
- * ability to enable other persons to work through the process of ethical decision making
- * desire to continue to grow theologically and maintain profession vitality.

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? ____Continue

2. Preacher/Interpreter of Sacred Texts

Using appropriate language and with effective delivery, a preacher or interpreter of Scriptures presents researched, organized, well-prepared, biblically-based and Spirit-

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filled sermons or other appropriate forms of proclamation that are relevant and challenging to the listener's life and spiritual development. To this end the Candidate demonstrates:

- * appropriate language and effective delivery
- * flexibility regarding diverse styles and expectations
- * ability to organize material effectively
- * ability to interpret sacred scriptures in a meaningful and effective manner
- * ability to address contemporary concerns and needs effectively
- * ability to empower one's listeners (congregation or constituency) to grow spiritually
- * ability to facilitate growth in other critical areas (e.g. discipleship) in others

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? ____Continue

3. Worship Leader

A worship leader is responsible for conducting the structured or formal aspects of worship - its sacraments or ordinances, its variety of rites, its arts of worship. The leader presents the sacraments or ordinances as a living sign of the presence of the holy, with meaningful confession, prayer and praise as appropriate. He or she is able to plan and lead a variety of worship opportunities, reflecting the traditions and commitments of the local church, synagogue, mosque or community of faith, involving him or herself in the spirit of the ceremony, and facilitating worship on the part of the whole community of God. To this end the Candidate is:

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- * well-grounded in the understanding and the meaning of the sacraments or ceremonies of the community and its tradition(s)
- * skilled in helping worshipers move purposefully through the liturgy or worship experience
- * able to make the liturgy or ceremony come alive for the congregation
- * skilled in interpretive reading of sacred scripture
- * able to provide opportunities for congregational participation in the liturgy or ceremony
- * competent in the field of sacred music and other art forms, with an understanding of their role in the liturgy or ceremony
- * able to frame worship appropriated within the sacred calendar
- * able to create and lead rituals and forms of worship for specific occasions or situations

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? _Continue

4. Prophetic Agent

Prophecy in the Bible is more than a matter of ecstatic speech uttered through the power of the Spirit (although it is this), and much more than merely telling the future (although it certainly has a strong eschatological dimension). A prophet is one who does not “foretell” so much as “forth-tell” the truth. As a prophet, a minister speaks the truth in love, communicates an awareness of social injustices, and sensitizes others to spiritual and ethical implications of various structures and practices in the

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church/synagogue/mosque/religious community, and in the wider society. To this end the

Candidate demonstrates:

- * a commitment to the transformation of the world
- * sensitivity to and/or empathy with victims of social injustice
- * skill in analyzing social structures and the ability to diagnose the roots of social problems
- * the ability to translate intuitions about needed change into specific strategies
- * the ability to discern the ethical implications of strategies for change
- * a willingness to embrace risk in order to create social change
- * an ability to communicate to others a passion for justice to inspire change
- * an ability to involve others in the process of seeking social change, to create group ownership, and to build coalitions
- * an awareness of his or her own cultural location and biases, and of the global implications of his or her commitments and/or actions

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? ____Continue

5. Leader

A leader is one who creates an environment in which the gifts of the Spirit may flourish. She or he is effective in empowering others to realize their own calling or gifts, and facilitates opportunities in which others can flourish. Such a person is characterized by a willingness to listen and respond, the capacity to take the initiative when appropriate, the ability to delegate responsibility to capable people, and the sensitivity to share resources.

To this end the Candidate demonstrates:

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- * a willingness to learn from others
- * an ability to communicate an overall sense of direction and to enable others to accomplish it
- * consistent ability to follow-through on plans
- * willingness and ability to take initiative when appropriate
- * willingness and ability to delegate responsibility to capable people
- * respect for talents and abilities of others, and ability to facilitate their exercise effectively
- * ability to motivate others to achieve their best efforts
- * ability to provide support and to follow-up on the initiatives of others
- * willingness to show appreciation for a job well done (including her or his own)
- * ability and willingness and/or ability to share knowledge and resources
- * ability to give constructive criticism effectively

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? ____ Continue

6. Religious Educator

A religious educator challenges the hearer to discover new resources within her or himself and others. He or she invites others to a new and more spiritually-enlightened consciousness about self and society. With creativity and courage he or she prompts us to ask new questions and work toward healing, reconciliation and justice. Such a challenge elicits personal growth in the gifts of the Spirit, which in turn overflow into the life of the community. To this end the Candidate demonstrates understanding of the learning

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process across the continuum of human life, and a sensitivity to the appropriateness of learning at each stage of development (childhood, adolescence, and adulthood)

- * ability to communicate religious concepts and challenges appropriately to different age groups
- * ability to analyze needs of individuals, organizations and communities and develop appropriate educational strategies or responses
- * ability to involve, train and supervise other educational leaders
- * ability to prepare and communicate subject matter
- * clarity and organization of thought
- * ability to employ sound teaching methods appropriate to one's hearers
- * openness to dialogue with others

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? _Continue

7. Counselor

Counseling is concerned with the work of healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. In performing these tasks the counselor has the privilege of walking with others on their inner journey toward wholeness. The effectiveness of any form of counseling is always contingent on the pastor, rabbi or other religious leader. Whatever model or theory one chooses to guide one's practice, it is imperative that the counselor be capable of establishing creative relationships that can help others become more whole. To the degree that the counselor is open, genuine, free, self-accepting and growing, she or he will foster these qualities in others. To this end the Candidate is:

- * an open, honest, genuine, free person

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- * a self-accepting and growing person
- * an accessible or approachable person
- * skilled in relating and communicating
- * able to aid in healing or restoration to wholeness
- * able to help others to sustain, to endure, and to work through difficulties or crises
- * able to guide others and to walk along them through their inner journey
- * able to be an agent of reconciliation, to re-establish broken relationships between self and others, and self and God
- * knowledgeable regarding human psychological development
- * able to recognize the limits on his or her own competency as a counselor, and to make appropriate referrals when necessary

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? __Continue

8. Pastor

One of the most common images or models of ministerial leadership in both Christian and Jewish traditions is that of the pastor, or shepherd. It is a model of ministry that derives directly from God. Psalm 23 tells us that the Lord is our Shepherd. In the pages of the Second Testament, Jesus appropriated this image to describe his own method of ministry and leadership. One of the earliest and most enduring images in Christian art is of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. In light of this model of ministry, the Candidate:

- * caringly administers the sacraments and ceremonies of the community
- * visits those who are ill, whether in the hospital or at home, including chronic shut-ins

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- * spends time with, and comforts those who are bereaved
- * welcomes, encourages and involves newcomers; cherishes and nurtures long-time members; seeks contact with inactive members
- * understands and practices “soul care”
- * understands and practices self-care

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? __Continue

9. Spiritual Leader

Ministers are spiritual leaders of the community. As such, they are expected to be able to communicate effectively to others spiritual presence and power. To do so, however, they must first be themselves grounded in spiritual disciplines, and regularly exercising personal spiritual practices. To this end the Candidate:

- * is familiar with the spiritual practices and background of his or her own religious community or tradition
- * sets an example in his or her own observance of spiritual disciplines, including the ability to observe Sabbath rest, i.e., a regular time of retreat for spiritual refreshment and renewal
- * is attentive to the spiritual journey of the on-going relationship with God of both one’s self and those in one’s pastoral care
- * is an effective spiritual guide to persons in their on-going relationship to God.
- * is effective in leading spiritual retreats, meetings or services
- * attends regularly or daily to spiritual discipline appropriate to his or her own tradition

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- * seeks to grow in the knowledge of the spiritual practices of other times and traditions

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? ____Continue

10. Ecumenist

“Ecumenical” comes from the Greek word meaning the entire inhabited world. An ecumenist is one who ministers effectively in a global context, pays attention to the unity of the whole human race while attending to the mission of one’s own faith tradition, encourages interfaith dialogue and understanding, and seeks to engage in activities that promote the peace or well-being of the city. To this end the Candidate demonstrates:

- * knowledge and appreciation of other denominational, confessional, cultural and/or religious traditions
- * a willingness and ability to foster dialogue and understanding across denominational, confessional, cultural or religious lines
- * an ability to provide structured opportunities for interdenominational, multicultural, and/or multifaith worship, education, and/or action.
- * an ability to inform the congregation of the needs, concerns and community involvement of other congregations and groups
- * a willingness to learn from other traditions and be challenged by other traditions of faith
- * sensitivity to issues of proselytism and past histories of conflict, oppression and violence

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

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What qualifying word would you assign? ____Develop

11. Witness or Evangelist

Ministry entails proclaiming good news in a variety of ways, non-verbally as well as verbally. In doing so a minister often extends the fundamental message of faith beyond the immediate boundaries of his or her own immediate religious community. Such activities need to be judged as to whether they are good news not just by those who are the insiders of a particular faith tradition, but by those who are on the outside as well. When carried out effectively, the witness that is made is truly experienced as life-giving by all who give it and receive it. To this end the Candidate:

- * communicates effectively inside and outside one's immediate community the central message or truth to which the community as a whole has been entrusted to bear witness
- * is willing to confess his or her fundamental faith commitments even in the face of hostility, and in ways that are not perceived to be belligerent
- * seeks to insure the future of the faith community and the integrity of its message
- * welcomes or invites others into the community of faith in ways that are appropriate to the particular tradition
- * avoids activities that can be perceived to be "sheep-stealing" or proselytizing

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? ____Continue

12. Administrator

An administrator is able to define and analyze a task or problem succinctly and clearly, establish concrete and realistic goals, develop strategies which flow out of these goals

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and initiate a clear, on-going process of evaluation. She or he communicates a sense of mission which sees each task as part of the whole life of the congregation and establishes a collegial environment in which the gifts of others are expressed. Through it all, there is precision, accuracy, organization and purpose. One senses that time is well spent, that efforts are not duplicated, and that efficiency is balanced against other competing factors.

To this end the Candidate demonstrates:

- * clarity and succinctness in defining and analyzing a task or problem
- * ability to establish concrete and realistic goals
- * capacity to develop strategies that flow from these goals
- * ability to evaluate achievements in order to decide next steps
- * ability to involve other persons in the process of decision making
- * ability to identify and make use of the personal and material resources of the congregation, organization, or community
- * understanding of group processes and dynamics, and an ability to work with them
- * ability to work to realize the mission of the whole through the various tasks that form its parts
- * ability to handle of details with precision and accuracy
- * efficiency and organization
- * ability to maintain effective lines of communication

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? ____ Continue

13. Professional

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The professionalization of ministry is sometimes lamented, but understood properly the minister as professional is one who realizes excellence in his or her calling. Among the skills that undergird the performance of ministry, those of the professional cannot be discounted. To this end the Candidate:

- * demonstrates skill in written communication, and is able to express him or herself well in written work
- * manages time well
- * limits his or her work load to what is do-able, and is able to say “no” when that is warranted
- * demonstrates a positive professional attitude toward self and others
- * demonstrates appropriate professional behavior in relation to the workplace
- * is dependable in the performance of tasks
- * is open, honest and personable in relations with people
- * is a good listener and communicator.
- * is able to deal constructively with conflict
- * can discriminate between professional and personal relationships while attending to both
- * practices self-care

Please give one or more examples of this competency as you have observed it:

What qualifying word would you assign? __Continue

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Appendix 1: Timeline

February 2013	Meet with advisor to discuss plan of action.
April 9, 2013	I will a begin month long Bible study concerning Matthew 22:39 and the words of Jesus to followers to “Love thy neighbor as thy self.”
June 8, 2013	An information day will be held consisting of community organizations that provide social, mental health, and medical services and local area churches. This activity will be carried out by me and the Site Team.

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Appendix 2: Budget

March 2013	Purchase Bibles and commentaries-\$ 150.00
June 2013	Materials, Refreshments and other misc. costs for Information Day-\$ 500.00
December 2013	Editing services for final draft document-\$ 750.00
Anticipated Total Expenses	\$ 1,400.00

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LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

Matt 19: 16-26

A. Brief Overview of the Times (Roman law, rules)

- a. Good deeds**
- b. Can one buy his/her way into heaven? c.**
- Glory to God, issues of man (Deut 6:4)**
- d. Value of Commandments**

B. Love- agape- moral or social love

- a. What does love mean to you?**
- b. Love/self- responsibility**
- c. Love/others-responsibility**
- d. Love- forgiveness (Matt 6:14,15)**
- e. Forgiving-self**
- f. Forgiving- others**
- g. Trust**
- h. Benefits of loving others, peace, joy**
- i. Reading of I Corinthians 13-Extension of Matt 19**

C. Who is my neighbor?

- a. Can we be selective?**
- b. What can we do to give back?**
- c. What were the benefits of this study? /Feedback**

APPENDIX B
Love Thy Neighbor Bible Study

SURVEY

- 1. Do you attend church regularly? (circle one) yes no**
- 2. How often do you read the Bible? Daily weekly seldom**
- 3. Do you have difficulty understanding Biblical texts? Yes no
sometimes**
- 4. Do you try to live by/govern yourself by Bible principals? Yes no
most of the time**
- 5. Do you believe that love is important to most or all relationships?**

POST SURVEY

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE

**Do you feel you have a better understanding of
love/neighbor/self? Yes No**

**Do you have a better understanding of the Bible concerning
this subject?
Yes No**

**Would you attend another study with this teacher/leader?
Yes No**

APPENDIX B
Love Thy Neighbor Bible Study

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR BIBLE STUDY Photo



Family Services Network of New York, Inc.

TAKE A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION!

HIV+ Support Group/Harm Reduction

Every Monday and Wednesday 2:00pm-3:00pm

1420 Bushwick Avenue. Brooklyn, New York 11207

If you're a HIV+ IV drug user or have a history of IV drug use, and looking for support to help you deal with your HIV status and disease, life issues, health concerns, and treatment issues, then this group is for you. Metro card provided.

For more information call Linda Woods-Harris at

718 573-3358 ext. 13

APPENDIX C
Community Resource Sites Visited

ST. JOHN BREAD AND LIFE

795 LEXINGTON AVENUE, BKLYN NY 11221 718-574-0058



GREAT NEWS!!!! We are a registered SINGLE STOP SITE!!! This means we can offer you assistance with the following:

- ♦ Online Food Stamps and Medicaid— Guests can apply Online for Food Stamps and Medicaid at our site. Screening of documentation must occur prior to applying. Please see a caseworker.
- ♦ Tax Services - during Tax Season—FOOD BANK prepares tax returns—AT NO CHARGE— and assists guests with securing the Earned Income Tax Credits.
- ♦ Legal—Urban Justice Center offers free advice on issues surrounding Food Stamps, Medicaid, Public Assistance and Emergency Rental Assistance. Tuesdays 9 to 11am **FIRST COME FIRST SERVE BASIS**

The Latest: WE also assist with Food Stamp Recertification— Call to find out more ...

- ♦ Soup Kitchen— Monday thru Friday **Breakfast 8AM to 930AM and LUNCH 10:30AM to 12N.**
- ♦ Digital Food Pantry— provide un-cooked meals Monday thru Friday 9am to 11:30am. Some documentation required. Please call 718-574-0058
- ♦ Project Identity— St. John's University Students provide assistance with obtaining or replacement of vital Records. **Please call for schedule.**
- ♦ Bridge to Justice—Immigration Clinic Thursdays and Fridays from 9 to 4pm. Appointments go quickly— Please call 718-574-0058.
- ♦ Fresh Air Fund— Applications are processed for children to go to Summer Camp or to a Private home for two weeks. Please call Rosemary Irizarry for more information. 718-574-0058

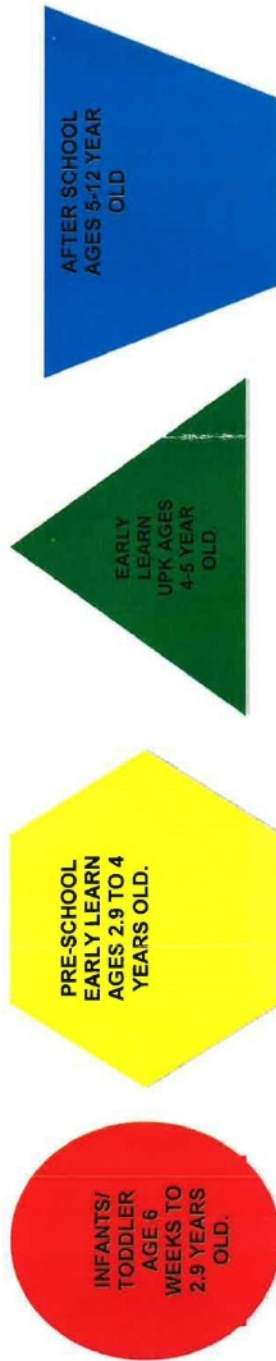
All our Services are FREE

**Did you know we also
have a
MOBILE SOUP KITCHEN!!**

**Serving HOT MEALS and offering
Social Services...**

Call for a location near YOU!!!

APPENDIX C
Community Resource Sites Visited



TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL CENTER

2469 BROADWAY, BROOKLYN, NY 11221

BETWEEN PUTNAM AVENUE AND CORNELIA STREET

Phone#: 718-443-2577 Fax#: 718-443-2545 Email: traditional1469@verizon.net

OPEN YEAR ROUND. HOURS ARE 7:00 A.M. TO 6:00 P.M.
SERVING HEALTHY MEALS AND SNACKS

CREATIVE CURRICULUM

Documents needed to register:

Child's Immunization record
Social security card
Birth certificate
Parent state I.D.
NYCDOH medical form completed &
stamped by doctor's office



ACS center –
Accepting Fee
Agreements

Se habla español.



Adult Daycare GRAND OPENING!

FREE!

if you qualify

- Transportation (door to door)
- Nutritious Hot Meals and Snacks
- Laundry Service
- Haircut and Nail Designs
- Exercise Program: Tai Chi, Yoga, Zumba and Healthy Breathing Techniques
- Citizenship Preparation Program
- Lawyer Consultation
- Case Management
- Appointment Scheduling
- Health, Nutrition, and Medication Education
- On site Medication Monitoring by Preferred Pharmacy
- Rest and Relaxation Breaks
- Religious Services and Bible Studying
- Arts, Crafts and Special Projects
- Games: Bingo, Ping Pong, Chess, Checkers, Air Hockey, Backgammon, Pool, Domino, etc...
- Current Event Groups and Movies
- English, Computer, Music and Dance Classes
- Trips, Shopping, Community Outings
- Parties and Celebration



Celebrate each day of your life!

Golden Age Adult Daycare is a social day program that provides unique, stimulating and comprehensive services to adults that require assistance; while enhancing socialization and daily living skills.

We offer a safe, supportive and culturally sensitive environment that promotes Health, Independence, Dignity and a Quality of Life.

Our goal is to enable you to live in your home and in the community; while tailoring a structured program that enriches the way you live.

Golden Age Adult Daycare will enhance your living and reward you with a feeling of success. Our specially designed programs will heighten your socialization and physical abilities.

Call us to schedule a visit or learn more about how we can help you celebrate each day of your life.



Start Living and we'll do the rest!

TO REGISTER CALL:

(718) 576-6336

1773 Broadway • Brooklyn, NY 11207
E-mail: goldenageaduldaycare@gmail.com
www.goldenageaduldaycare.com

Designed & Printed by A.R.S. Printing (718) 743-8070

APPENDIX C
Community Resource Sites Visited

FAMILY SERVICES NETWORK OF NEW YORK, INC
HARM REDUCTION PROGRAM

bridging the gaps
b e t w e e n
substance use,
HIV/AIDS and
mental health

PROVIDING COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

406 MOTHER GASTON BLVD. BK, NY 11212
(718)495-9747

1766 BROADWAY BK, NY 11207
(718) 573-3358

FREE Confidential HIV Testing

FREE HEPATITIS C TESTING

FREE CONDOMS
MALE & FEMALE

OVERDOSE PREVENTION

ASK FOR REFERRALS!

FOR THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

- MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING
- DETOX
- REHABILITATION
- FOOD PANTRY
- HOUSING
- MEDICAL CARE
- AND MORE

LOCATIONS:

IF YOU OR ANYONE YOU KNOW ARE IN NEED OF OUR SERVICES STOP BY AND SPEAK WITH US. WE ARE HERE TO MEET YOU WHERE YOU ARE AND HELP YOU REACH YOUR PERSONAL GOALS.

APPENDIX D
BEDFORD STUYVESANT COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Community/ Church Exchange Listing in Bedford Stuyvesant

**Broadway Community
Children and Family Health Care**

Pediatric and Dental
1446 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11221
Phone: 718-571-4910
Fax 718-455-3371

Traditional Education Center

Pre-K 3-5 years old also 6-12 years old
ACS Center
1469B Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11221
Phone: 718-443-2577
Ms. Rodriguez

Brightside Academy

1491 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11221
Phone: 877-868-2273
www.brightsideacademy.com
Early education and child care, rehab, medical, accept vouchers for children 6 wks to 5 years,
parental assistance provided, public health solutions.

Broadway Medical Center

1534 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11221
Primary Care, Physical Therapy, Asthma, Family Practitioner, Chiropractor, Diabetes,
Cardiology. Acupuncturist, Pulmonology, Rehab
Phone: 718-576-6266

New Pride Day Care Center

1636 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11207
Phone: 718-453-0204
Director: Melena Davidson

Salvation Army Transitional Family Housing

1675 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11207
Referral through Emergency Services in the Bronx

Superior Day Care Center

1741 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11207
Phone: 718-975-4904
Director: Mrs. Susan

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation of NY, PC

1765 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11207
Phone: 718-455-3400
No Fault Accidents

APPENDIX D
BEDFORD STUYVESANT COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Golden Age Adult Day Care

1773 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11207
Phone: 718-576-6336

Family Services Network of New York

1766 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11207
Phone: 718-455-8396
718-575-3358

St. John Bread and Life

795 Lexington Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11221
Soup Kitchen, ((breakfast and lunch), Digital Food Pantry, Mobile Soup Kitchen, Project Identity, Online Food Stamps and Medicare, Tax Services, Legal Services
Phone: 718-574-0058

Bed Stuy Campaign Against Hunger

2010 Fulton St. Brooklyn, NY 11233
Supermarket style pantry, Food Stamp Screening, Enrollment for Publically Supported Health Insurance, HIV Screening, Financial Workshops, Mobile Services Van, Resume Writing Workshops
718-773-3551

The New Open Door C.O.I.G.C

999 Greene Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11221
Food distribution, soup kitchen (Sat and Sun), educational tutoring, boutique
718-455-3545

Black Veterans for Social Justice, Inc.

665 Willoughby Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11206
Supported Housing Program, Homeless Veterans' reintegration 1;
Serving single male veterans, Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program 3;
Serving single female veterans and veterans with families, HIV/AIDS prevention & outreach, Prison Outreach
Phone: 718-852-6004
Fax: 718-852-4805

After Hours Project

1204 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11221
Brooklyn, NY 11221
Intake and assessments, Syringe exchange program, Hepatitis C education and screening, Hepatitis A and B vaccinations
718-249-0755

Paul J. Cooper for Human Services 510

Gates Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11216
Chemical Dependency, Alcohol, Drugs, Anger Management, Psychological Evaluations, Couples Therapy
718-455-3545

APPENDIX D
BEDFORD STUYVESANT COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Ready Willing & Able (The Doe Fund)

520 Gates Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11216

Paid transitional work; Drug relapse prevention AA/NA meetings, GED, Pre-GED; Adult literacy and computer skills training, Career Development classes; Job readiness and placement services, Lifelong graduate resources including career counseling; Job placement assistance and additional training

718-622-0877

Gates Avenue Center for Opportunity

520 Gates Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11216

Serves former homeless and incarcerated males

APPENDIX E
CHURCH/COMMUNITY EXCHANGE DAY FLYER AND INVITATION



956 Putnam Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11214

(718)-808-5157 (Tel)

Rev. Donald Odom, Pastor

ODOM555@AOL.COM

November 20, 2013

Dear Community Partner:


Who is my neighbor? In passing through the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood how often have you asked yourself what goes on in that building? Often too busy to stop and inquire. In working to minimize the gap between the local church, community organizations and agencies representing the residents of the Bedford-Stuyvesant area, there will be a **Church/Community Exchange Day** event on Saturday December 14, 2013 at the **Holy Trinity Universal Church**, 754 Quincy St. from 9:30-11:30 AM.

The goal of this event is to introduce the local churches to agencies and organizations to each other and begin a dialogue that will benefit all parties to assist those in need in the neighborhood. Those who have programs that assist the homeless, senior citizens, mental health, education and social services are encouraged to participate. Representatives from these programs are encouraged to present a brief five to ten minute presentation to introduce their available services to those in attendance.

I pray that you will take time from your busy schedule to join us on this day to share information about what your agency/organization is doing in the Bedford-Stuyvesant community and how your goals and mission could be advanced with the assistance of your new friends. There will be a continental breakfast served.

Please feel free to bring your brochures, pamphlets and business cards to share with others. Please feel free to call me to confirm your attendance at 718-808-5157. Thanking you in advance for sharing.

Sincerely,

Rev. 

Rev. Donald Odom, Pastor
Consistent Life Ministries

APPENDIX E
CHURCH/COMMUNITY EXCHANGE DAY FLYER AND INVITATION



Please Join Our
Church/Community Exchange Day Event

Saturday, December 14, 2013 @ 9:30 A.M.
at the Holy Trinity Universal Church
754 Quincy Street
Brooklyn, New York

*Information
Sharing.*

*Help the
Community.*

*Advance Your
Organization's
Mission and
Goals.*

Meet new friends.



*"Come looking to
add new partners
for your outreach
ministry."*

*"...seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it,
because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Jeremiah 29:7*

Please Call (718)-808-5157 to Confirm Your Attendance

A Continental Breakfast will be Served.

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